

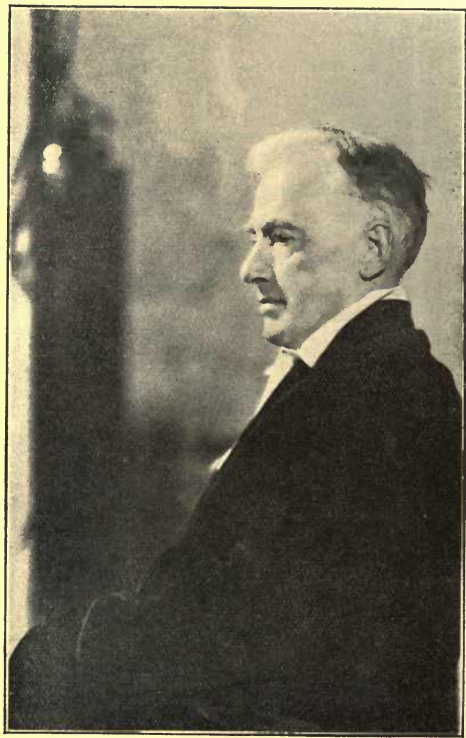




ADVENTURES IN LONDON







*[Photo by Howard Coster]*  
THE AUTHOR

# ADVENTURES IN LONDON

*by*

JAMES DOUGLAS



LONDON : HERBERT JOSEPH  
9 JOHN STREET ADELPHI

ADVENTURES  
IN LONDON

JOHN STREET

JOHN STREET  
LONDON

## FOREWORD

**T**HIS book is a cross between a ghost and a corpse. It is a lively corpse, for this is its second exhumation. It drew breath nearly thirty years ago in the dying arms of its foster-mother, the *Morning Leader*, a London newspaper which now sleeps soundly in the Fleet Street cemetery beside the *Standard*, the *Tribune*, the *Westminster Gazette*, the *Daily Chronicle*, the *St. James's Gazette*, the *Morning*, the *Echo*, the *Globe*, and divers other dead journals.

The *Morning Leader* died and my "Adventures in London" would have perished with it if Sir Arthur Spurgeon had not persuaded me to dig it out of its grave so that Messrs. Cassell & Co. might give it a new lease of life in a noble volume with a frontispiece which is now a ghost of a ghost, for it is a photograph of myself as a young Victorian with a Victorian moustache.

The book has been out of print for many years and is so hard to come by that it is vainly sought after by collectors. Its second exhumation is due in the first place to the enthusiasm of my friend, Mr. Herbert Joseph, its present publisher, and

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in the second place, to the generosity of Messrs. Cassell & Co., who have kindly granted me their permission to republish it.

It has died twice, but although it is dead it will not lie down. Its habit of rising from its grave is hard to defend, but it may be palliated by the plea that it is a period picture of the vanished London scene.

The book is a ghost as well as a corpse, for the rapturous young man who wrote it is a disembodied phantom. I repudiate him utterly, although I once masqueraded in his cloak. I find it hard to believe that I ever wrote anything quite so bad in some respects or quite so good in others.

But my ghost is walking through these purple patches, and as he walks I beg you to remember that he is a young ghost with all the innocent exuberance of youth.

J. D.



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## INTRODUCTION

**W**HAT the whale was to Jonah, London is to the Londoner. When I first set foot in London I felt as Jonah felt when he first set foot in his whale. I felt the sensation of being splendidly swallowed. For many years I have been walking up and down in my whale, feeling its sombre sides, groping along its gloomy ribs, and desperately trying to imagine what it is doing or dreaming as it voyages through the seas of time. After all my fumbling and stumbling I know as little about my London as Jonah knew about his whale. I have achieved a comfortable familiarity with a few of its streets and a few of its passions, but my familiarity is not tinged with contempt. It is the familiarity of fear.

Jonah may have despised the whale after he crawled out of its belly, but while he lived in its belly the whale was his universe. Its back to him was more awful than the spacious firmament on high. Its head and its tail to him were more majestic than the ends of the earth. What must have broken Jonah's heart was the august indiffer-

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ence of the whale. The whale did not know Jonah was there. He did not give the whale even an attack of indigestion. London is like that. It does not know you are there. It swallows and digests you as it swallows and digests millions of other small fry. Jonah may have beaten the whale with his fists and stamped upon it with his feet. He may have cursed it. Just so have many men beaten London and stamped on London and cursed London as they writhed in its belly. But London is too huge to be hurt by a pigmy rage or a puny wrath ; it can hardly feel a riot ; it would scarcely notice an insurrection ; it would ignore an earthquake.

London is so gigantic that she can see herself and feel herself only in fragments. Other towns know their own business, but London lives on vague rumours about herself. If she heard that a mile of her had been burnt, she would not trouble to go and look at her own ashes. She would send a New Zealander to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's from a broken arch of London Bridge. If she were told that the House of Commons had been blown into the Thames, she would not miss it from her oblivious heart. The insensibility of London is more dreadful than the insensibility of the sea. The indifference of London is more dire than the indifference of the Sahara. The sea is made out of drops of salt water, but London is made out of

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human tears. The Sahara is made out of blown grains of sand, but London is made out of the blown souls of men. The impassivity of dead matter is a very horrible thing, so horrible that you would go mad if you thought steadily about the stars. But the impassivity of the living millions of living London is infinitely more horrible. It is the tragedy of a dead soul in a quick body. You can touch the living body of London that lies stretched out from one horizon to another, you can hear the beating of its heart of hearts, you can see the sulphurous breath of its smoke-blackened lungs, but you cannot feel its soul, for it is a city without a soul, a nation without a nationality, an energy without a will.

There is a flower called London Pride, but where is the Pride of London? In vain do visionaries strive to lash London into a civic vitality. London maintains her stony lethargy. Against her granite vastness our visions break into spray, and our dreams are shattered into vapour on her league-long bastions. No passion is powerful enough to fuse her massed towns into a glowing glory of faith and purpose. She is a mighty city made out of many mean cities, an imperial metropolis made out of petty parishes. Her greatness is a chaos of trifles, and her immensity is a welter of splendid vulgarities. She is a kaleidoscope of broken glass and diamond-dust and powdered jewels, gorgeous

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as a whole, but squalid when they are spilt on the ground. She afflicts the imagination with a nightmare of smoking stone surging wearily against the sky, breaking sadly in grey billows over the shores of the inundated earth. No angel stands up out of the heaving waste of architecture to cry aloud its import and its aim, its grandeur and its grace.

London is too great to possess her soul. She means so much and so many things that she is meaningless. She is a Town of Towns, a City of Cities, an amorphous monster whose whole is greater than its parts, and yet not great enough to be unipersonal. A citizen of London is a citizen of Nowhere. A citizen of Bayswater or Battersea is a citizen of Nothing. London is too formlessly huge to love or to be loved, too vaguely vast to inspire devotion or to give allegiance. Her immeasurable girth baffles our affection and evades our caress. She is too big to belong to us and we are too small to belong to her. She is a wilderness without a conscience, a desert without an ideal, a solitude without a soul. What she needs is a dream large enough to strike along her brain and flush her limbs with passionate life, a colossal dream that would transcend her material necessities and weld her millions into one spiritual will. Dreamers have often dreamed that dream, dreamed it in an agony of pity and sympathy and

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yearning as they sat gazing down on the sorrowfully inarticulate city as Christ gazed down on Jerusalem. Dreams of social equality, dreams of brotherhood, dreams of beauty, dreams of tolerance, dreams of service and sacrifice—they rise and fade over London like her wreaths of smoke, they are coloured and discoloured like her clouds, they are beautiful in their rash unreality, lovely in their daring fragility. But some day the dreams of the generations of dreamers will come true, and the soul of London will be born.

In the meanwhile, we can but watch the enduring passion of London, with its titanic farce rising into a titanic comedy, and its titanic comedy rising into a titanic tragedy that defeats every analysis and defies every synthesis. No brush can paint the passion of London. All the bewildered spectator can do is to make little monuments of little moments. The great show hurries by and sheds only a faint image on the mirror of the mind, a blurred breath on the polished steel of the imagination. These adventures of mine are only a masque of driven shadows and ghostly mists. They are the footprints of forgotten sensations. They are the drops that the storm of London flings against the window-pane. They are tiny sparks blown out of the roaring furnace of her life, with its turmoil of work and pleasure, its tumult of hope and despair, its chorus of laughter

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and tears, its chant of delight and despair, its clamour of anger and resignation, its riot of terror and wonder, its war of wisdom and folly, its clash of men and things. They are the adventures of a vagrant wandering in a labyrinth of sensations, some of them ephemeral, but most of them a part of the ordinary life of the ordinary Londoner. What I have felt in my way most Londoners have felt in theirs, for the life of London is made out of my feelings and yours, and the passion of London is merely the passion of one man multiplied by millions. The spectacle is bewildering, but I see it as you see it, darkly and dimly, and what I see I try to say. The movement of London may be meaningless, but at least it is amusing and at least it moves. There is some inscrutable energy behind the gestures of London, whether they are the gestures of the statesman on the platform or the gestures of the actor on the stage, whether they are the gestures of the hungry man who begs for bread or the gestures of the athlete striving for victory. Time is a gesture of eternity, and life is a gesture of time, and these little gestures of London are a part of the great gesticulation which is the universe.



# ADVENTURES IN LONDON

## IN THE FOG

**I** LOVE fog. I hate the Smoke Abatement Society. They want to rob the poor poet of his visions and the poor painter of his dreams. They are ready to sacrifice the whimsies of mystics to the comfort of millions. It is an outrage. A Whistler symphony is cheaply purchased at the price of a million sneezes. Fog costs London five millions a year. Is not a sonnet in smoke worth fifty millions? Is not a madrigal in mist worth a crore of rupees?

Let us sally forth into the fog that is blind-folding London. London is playing a gigantic game of Blindman's Buff. With one foot planted on the south side of the Thames, and the other on the north side, her left hand gropes round the Crystal Palace and her right hand fumbles at Harrow-on-the-Hill. Her broad, fair brows are bound with fog-wreaths. She is a ghostly maiden whose limbs shimmer through soft tissues of vaporous silver.

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Let us walk up Fleet Street. It is fognoon. The newspaper offices are muffled to the eyes, and the Griffin at Temple Bar flaps its wings in the porous gloom. It is the Genius of Fog, breathing sulphurous breath up Ludgate Hill into the face of St. Paul's, choking the lawyers in Chancery Lane and the Temple, stifling Justice in the Law Courts, and turning everything into a dim fantasy.

The fog sprite is the only wizard left to us. His enchantments defy the march of reason. He laughs at science. The Law Courts yesterday were new, hard, and hideous. Now they seem to be as old as the Tower, and they peer through the mist like palaces of dream. Going down the Strand we see two great battleships plunging through the fog wall in single line ahead. They are the churches of St. Clement Danes and St. Mary le Strand. There is the stern wraith of Gladstone walking on waves of vapour, a violent sword gesticulating at his feet. In Aldwych there is a vast chasm of fog. The courtyard of Somerset House is a cauldron of boiling fumes and tormented phantoms that were statues once. The Gaiety Theatre looks gigantic in its mantle of mist. Its curves seem to stretch into infinity.

Waterloo Bridge is like the mouth of Hades spewing out of its formless lips a groaning multitude of vehicles, coming out of nowhere through nothing into nowhere. In an alcove a man is

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roasting chestnuts. He seems absurdly solid compared to these phantoms of men and horses. The bridge is like the Bridge of Mirza, for the ghosts seem to fall through broken arches into the river that seems to be a fog moving under a fog, as one cloud moves under another.

Down the greasy steps we dive, and wander along the Embankment. Leaning over the parapet we see the flat surface of the water sliding stealthily along. It is caked and crusted with the breath of the fog, for the fog breathes on it as you breathe on a polished mirror, filming its fluent shield with slimy whorls and trails and spirals. Through the fog a sea-gull flies like a shadow, and in the blurred water casts a shadow of a shadow. But for the rough, cold, hard granite under our elbows we should doubt the reality of the bird and its shadow, and of the river that seems to be the shadow of the fog.

Life is very vague here. Cleopatra's Needle floats elusively in the grey like a spectre on the wharves of Acheron. Its sphinxlets smile their bland satiric smile, and protrude their malignantly placid paws. A green, iridescent sheen shifts in the hollows of their brazen haunches. They look like evil monsters that have crept out of the curdling leprosy of the Stygian stream below.

But a band of sparrows dispels our vision, and our eyes rest with delight on a white sea-mew

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nestling on the water, its snowy plumage unsoiled by watery fog or foggy water. It is a symbol of humanity drifting through the fog of life along the river of death.

Up the steps we climb and we walk along to Hungerford Bridge. We meet the Witch of Endor, an old woman in a rusty cloak, bent double on two crutches, and carrying three leathern wallets that are doubtless full of spells and charms, love philtres and potions, poisons and talismans, waxed men and candles made of human fat. Only in the fog shall you encounter such.

Again the sombre water draws us into a dream. Without a ripple it flows under the fading arches, flecked with flotsam and jetsam, sullenly dreeing its weird in a sad silence that is shattered now and then by the stroke of a distant hammer, by faint fog-signals, sounding against the background of the muted traffic-moan of London. Suddenly a dog barks incongruously, and then through the grey vagueness a grotesque lion appears, as if some giant had cut it with great scissors out of the fog. For a moment we stare at it in stupefaction, and then we remember the lion on the roof of the Brewery. Griffins, sphinxlets, dogs, and lions are strange beasts when you meet them in a mist.

But now Charon himself breaks through the gloom. He is standing in the bows of his shadowy

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barge, pulling two gigantic oars that dip with a soft splash in the phantom river. But the Ferryman has no passengers; his face is pink, and a white collar gleams coldly under his chin. Does Charon wear a collar? Look! What is that shadowy shallop shooting out of the arch? It is a Thames police boat, patrolling in the fog for casual suicides. Are there many? A fog-bound policeman tells us that there are few suicides in winter. The water is colder than life!

Back across the bridge we go, down the steps, past the Playhouse and Charing Cross Station, up Northumberland Avenue into a Trafalgar Square that is peopled with ghosts of kings and generals. Charles I on his long-tailed charger and Gordon with his folded arms seem to be listening to the music of the invisible fountains. The National Gallery looks like a cardboard toy. The Nelson column is strangely unsubstantial, a shaft of shadow without beginning or end, base or apex, a mere slit in the curtain of fog.

In Leicester Square the leafless trees are sharply silhouetted against the grey, and the Mauresque façade of the Alhambra glimmers romantically through the fog-rack. In Piccadilly Circus Gilbert's Mercury seems to be hurrying over the clouds with a *billet-doux* to Leda. Frail, fragile and filmy seem the hansoms and omnibuses that stumble along

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Regent Street. The finger of the fog dissolves the most solid realities. Even the London policeman it turns into a faint, wan phantom, a belted ghost.

## STORM BEFORE SUNRISE

**B**ED is the safest place except the grave. When you are in bed you know that you cannot be killed by a motor-car. Therefore as a rule your mind is at rest when you are in bed. The only peril which threatens you in bed is lightning. The other night I was roused out of my slumbers by lightning of the most intrusive brand. I tried to ignore it for some minutes, but at last I found it was useless to pretend any longer that I was asleep; so I opened my eyes and watched the lightning.

I have seen all sorts of lightning in all sorts of places. I have seen lightning on the top of a mountain. I have seen lightning at sea. But this lightning was the most vicious lightning I ever saw. It seemed to light up my brain as well as the sky. It seemed to trickle along my nerves and down my spine. Perhaps I was in a super-sensitive state of mind and soul, but I confess the lightning worried me and vexed me and irritated me.

At last I could bear it no longer, so I got up and

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watched the pranks of the lightning. From my window I could see a vast tract of sky. The lightning was busy all over it. Sometimes it swept over the sky in a soft wash of shining flame, making all the clouds seem as solid as houses. Tidal lightning is not terrifying. It wears a benignant and benevolent aspect, as if some good-humoured electrician were manipulating a gigantic limelight in the clouds. The thunder was dim and distant. It rolled and rumbled lazily, and to the ear it seemed like a misty range of remote mountains, dark peaks and ridges rising and falling in a continuous rhythm of muffled sound.

But gradually the reverberating ranges came nearer, the noise grew sharper and clearer. Then the lightning began to fork itself. Jagged spurts of yellow fire began to blaze in all directions. The blackness of the night was roughly torn into horrible rents of darting flame. The silence seemed to thicken until it became almost a tangible thing, a kind of coarse texture that was split by the thunder. The thunder began to lose its soft, musical drum-note. It began to rip and crack, and I felt that it was exploding rather than booming. The lightning seemed to grow angrier, and the flashes gradually grew malignant and malevolent. There was a vehement caprice in their headlong riot. The space between the flashes grew less until they became continuous. The whole sky was



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alive with every variety of irregular fulguration. There were long flashes that seemed to run from the very height of heaven down to the chimney-pots that stood out against the sky. There were short fierce jabs of fire that looked like furious thrusts delivered by invisible swordsmen ambushed in banks of cloud.

As I watched the interplay of the flashes it seemed as if there were an army of giants waging an Armageddon in the air. The giants were fighting with swords a mile long, and as their great blades crossed and clashed the lightning sprang like sparks from steel. It was like a duel of gods. The lightnings were the swords of the gods and the thunder was the voice of their artillery. The clamour and tumult seemed strangely inhuman. I felt that man was not concerned in the conflict that raged in the firmament. The combatants were engaged in a combat which made the combats of men seem trivial and unimportant. The whole business of life appeared to be a little thing. Our civilization and its affairs were suddenly dwarfed and belittled by the savage forces let loose in the night.

As the lightning crept closer and closer I felt the presence of invisible danger. My eyes grew weary of the blinding illumination. I longed for the cool dark and the cool silence. The swift flame with its sharp speed seemed to brush my flesh as it plunged

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down the dizzy sky. The thunder seemed to split over my head, with a rasping, tearing violence that shook my nerves and made my heart sick with faintness. The din appeared to make the windows rattle, and the very walls round me seemed to reel and totter. I began to wonder what I should feel if the lightning struck me. I tried to argue against the possibility of being struck. I assured myself that death by lightning is a rare sort of death, and that the odds against my death by lightning were enormously great. But in spite of the reasonings of reason I felt a sharp terror creeping through my brain. Surely all that pageantry of peril could not be utterly innocuous. Surely somebody was being slain by some of those cruel spears of death. Although I knew that I was safe I felt horribly unsafe. The crashing of the thunder out-argued me. Mere noise is a thing against which reason is useless.

The thunder grew steadily noisier. It seemed more and more menacing, and as it roared in my ears my courage oozed away. I was indignant with myself for feeling afraid. I denounced myself as a coward. But nevertheless my cowardice grew, and I became feverishly impatient. I wished that the whole thing would stop. "How much longer is it going on?" I asked. I built up a great grievance in my soul. Why all this pother about nothing? Why could not the thunder thunder and the

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lightning lighten somewhere else, and let me alone? I actually resented the thing. I took it as a personal affront.

Then the rain came, and I welcomed the rain as if it were a friend. It fell like a lake edgeways in great silver showers through which the lightning played hide-and-seek. Amid my terror I found room for delight in the beauty of the illuminated rain that glittered like diamonds on fire. Slowly the rain seemed to sponge the lightning out of the sky. The thunder retreated sulkily and sullenly. Then a great darkness and a great silence crept across the sky. I felt the blackness and the stillness like the touch of a hand in the night. After a while the darkness began to whiten into dawn. The sky gradually paled and cleared, and an ineffable peace came lapping and lipping the roofs. The London sparrows began to twitter sleepily, and their twitterings sounded strangely soft and gentle and companionable after all the rattle and racket and riot of the storm.

Creeping back to bed, I felt utterly worn and weary. My head ached with noise and my eyes were hard and dry with the glare. My flesh was tired as if it had been beaten with rods. At last I fell asleep. Next morning I eagerly read the newspapers to see what damage had been done by the rioters of heaven. Nothing! All that row

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had been meaningless. Really, thunder and lightning are theatrical impostors. They overdo their business. The storm, after all, was only a storm in a teacup.

## IN NUBIBUS

O ! it is pleasant, with a heart at ease,  
Just after sunset, or by moonlight skies,  
To make the shifting clouds be what you please,  
Or let the easily persuaded eyes  
Own each quaint likeness issuing from the mould  
Of a friend's fancy ; or with head bent low  
And cheek aslant see rivers flow of gold  
'Twixt crimson banks ; and then, a traveller, go  
From mount to mount through Cloudland, gorgeous land !

**T**HE roof of London is the loveliest in the world, yet few Londoners have ever seen it. They walk along the streets without lifting up their eyes to the most gorgeously painted ceiling that ever glorified mortal dreams and desires.

The sky is the only unexplored and unexploited region of the earth. The pageantry of sea and land has been lavishly painted by poets and prose-men, but the sky has been scurvily treated as a casual quarry for similists and metaphoricians. Now that the age of the airship has dawned, and man has tardily embarked upon the conquest of the kingdom of the clouds, it is time to protest against this immemorial ostracism. Wordsworth rediscovered the lyrical loveliness of the land.

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Swinburne rediscovered the lyrical loveliness of the sea. The world now waits for the advent of a great bard who shall rediscover the lyrical loveliness of the sky. If Swinburne had not dedicated his music to the sea, he might have been the laureate of the sky, but it is not given to even a prince of poets to become regent of the moving roof as well as regent of the moving floor.

The changeful splendours of the London sky are wrought out of the breath of her body, for her breath is smoke. Out of the myriad chambers in her great lungs she sends forth a mystery of wreathing shapes that are transfigured into innumerable fantasies by the light of the sun and moon and stars. I marvel that a painter like Sir William Richmond should lead the vandals who long to banish the gnomes of smoke and the elves of fog, and who would cover London with a harsh canopy of steely blue, as blatantly brilliant as the roof of Paris and the ceiling of Rome. Let us worship our Lady of Smoke, our divinely grimy London, who scatters every day before our windows her largesse of filmy glory.

I hate the Philistines who seek to rob the London poet of the one realm which consoles him for the loss of the windy vistas of dale and valley, moor and mountain, hill and heather, shining river and flaw-roughened sea. I loathe a pure and vacant sky, a depopulated inane. The empty horror of

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the smokeless ether affrights me. I shrink from the bare, inhospitable wastes wherein the stars go voyaging in lonely splendour. Give me the homely curls and whorls of human smoke, the cursive vocabulary of mortal hearths, warm with the comedy and tragedy of men and women. I can decipher in these dissolving runes and melting hieroglyphs the chronicles of a million firesides, the abstracts and biographies of loves innumerable, of pathetic labouring souls, dark with failure or bright with obscure patience. Often our London sky flames like an old missal, illuminated with all the colours of the human comedy, and engrossed with the scripture of life.

It is this companionable friendship of the humanised sky that I love beyond the alien austerities of the smokeless air. It takes you with a tender embrace as you return from a sojourn amid the inhuman grandeurs of untempered Nature. The married comradeship of these chimnied and steepled clouds lessens your dread of the illimitable spaces that deride your little dreams. They shelter you from the irony of the stars. Eternity is broken into tolerable fragments by the assailing towers and storming spires of London; and the upward surge of her billowing stones drowns the thunder of infinity. This celestial impermanence poised upon human permanence, heavenly change balanced upon mortal immutability, can calm and

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fortify the spirit troubled by its own unstable state, and the spectacle of enduring streets with hoary names silhouetted against the vanishing brevity of skyey thoroughfares steadies the dizzy imagination.

The sense of beauty does not starve in London, for at any moment its hunger may be appeased by an upward glance at the travelling procession of atmospheric angels trailing their many-coloured robes from east to west. The vexed heart can escape from its prison of toil and pleasure in the twinkling of an eye. The fretted brain can set a tiny nerve in motion and soothe its lassitude with fairy shapes and hues beyond the divinest dreams of man. For London is the supreme alchemist of beauty who can transmute the heavy lead of reality into the filigree gold of romance.

Can the average sensual man see these aerial epics? Well, I think we all underrate the romantic spark in ourselves and in others. We conceal our wonder and mask our imagination. It is habitude. We are wont to keep our eyes low. We do not welcome the spiritual surprise of the white Alps that soar above the Strand, the unclimbed peaks that look down upon Pall Mall. We do not bathe in the Mediterranean waters whose foam-flecked blue washes Saffron Hill and the straits of Little Italy. But these delights are ours if we look up



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between the gorges and ravines of brick and stone into the unsoilable heavens.

For most of us sunrises are luxuries. Have you ever seen a London sunrise? Have you walked through the streets during a long summer dawn? Have you seen London sloughing the night, her lamps paling slowly in the pearly, luminous whiteness that creeps out of the grey like an angel out of the arms of a ghost? Have you overheard the colourless silences that seem to fall like invisible snowflakes of soundless sound on the roofs of the sleeping houses and the dust of the desolate streets?

Well, perhaps these ecstasies are for the few. But the sunsets of London are for us all. There are many ways of seeing them. I like to watch them from any of the bridges across the Thames between Richmond and the Tower. The Serpentine bridge is also an ideal haunt for the lover of sunsets, for you can watch the clouds over a tender foreground of water and trees and roofs. But it is best to let the London sunset ravish you unawares, on foot, at a window, in a train, or on the top of a bus. Perhaps the bus is the best of all. I love the bus. If the hansom is the London gondola, the bus is the London galleon. Do not travel inside a bus. Outside is the place, and I like it better than the box-seat on a coach. Seated high above the crawling traffic, you can breathe the bracing air

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and see the wonderful clouds from the Bank to the World's End. Many a magical sunset may be seen from the bus going westward along Holborn and Oxford Street, along Piccadilly and the Knightsbridge Road, violent conflagrations of the sky roaring and seething strangely above the familiar jingling of hansom bells, the clear clatter of iron-shod hoofs, the rattle of harness, the hoot of motor horns, the cries of newsboys, and the dumb show of pedestrians.

## HAMPSTEAD HEATH

Come, come, come and make eyes at me,  
Down at the Old Bull and Bush.  
Come, come, drink some port wine with me,  
Down at the Old Bull and Bush.  
Hear the little German Band,  
Just let me hold your hand,  
De-e-e-ar !  
Do, do, come and have a drink or two.  
Down at the Old Bull and Bush.

**S**ING hey for Whit Monday on Hampstead Heath! Here is your true Bartholomew Fair, the fat humour of jolly London rolling between green leaves and green grass, richly tickled with the great cockney joke of being alive.

Hard by Jack Straw's Castle the holiday harlequinade is at its hottest, and we are bewildered by the grotesquery of this cauldron boiling and bubbling over with variegated faces; health jostling disease, filth elbowing freshness; maids in snowy muslin beside hags in rags; rosy, high-collared clerks; new-shaven workmen; natty, bepowdered shopgirls; greasy knaves and grimy rogues; nursemaids in fragrant butcher's blue with stainless children, and trollops trailing muddy urchins. Heartily Dame Nature stirs

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this broth-pot of humanity, and as she lets its multifarious odour steam into the nostrils of the sun, the Gargantuan paunch of St. Paul's at our feet seems to shake with laughter, and the far under-growl of London mellows into a gigantic chuckle.

Grotesque is the multitude, and still more grotesque its food and drink. No roast oxen, no boar's head, no fountains spouting wine, but a chaos of comic comestibles, jaundiced plumcake, bananas, oranges, hunks of bread, torrents of sickly biscuits, glass tubs of amber lemonade siphoned sweating into tumblers, forged ales, and terrible tea; ghastly sweetmeats, and fearful shellfish fainting in the dust and heat; American maizypop, livid ices, and that good democratic champagne, ginger beer.

Grotesque, too, are our amusements. Paramount is the hairy cocoanut, astonished target of many missiles. Like a gibbet rises the Strengthometer, luring Thor to wield the hammer and ring the bell that registers 1760 units of virility. "The Game of Fair Play" is seductive. Eight skittles encircle a pillar from whose crest hangs a ball. You set the ball swinging round the pillar. It curls and uncurls itself, and "every time you hit the 8 you get a penny." Has anybody ever hit the "8"? Behold the noble game of "Hand Billiards!" There, too, is the pigeon-hole game. Round a

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horizontal nest of pigeon-holes ramps an orgy of felonious delf and criminal crockery. If you can pot a ball, you can choose a crime. A wisp of a man is bowling with the craft of a Bosanquet. He does the hat trick, and promptly sells his three prizes to the dejected proprietress for eighteenpence and three balls. Footer, too, is possible. You kick a tethered football through a hole in a screen. Fiercest is the fun round the living target, a grinning black face thrust through a hole in a white sheet, at which you may hurl three balls for a penny.

But all these delights shrivel as you reach the heart and hub of the lusty carnival. Towering high above a swaying tide of heads are three polychromatic booths "ranged in royal rank a-row." One is the Palace of Pugilism, where you may see "The Hero of Two Hundred Fights," and sigh over the vanished splendour of the Ring.

Beside the last of the bruisers is the latest tremor of modernity, the cinematograph. We pay our twopence and plunge into the dark tent. ("Don't!") A battlefield shivers on the sheet. ("How dare you?") The wounded are neatly arranged in rows—"Oh-b-b!"—and over each man bends a neat nurse in spotless uniform—(*Disturbance*)—her cap streamers fluttering in the breeze. (*Loud kisses.*)

All this is humorous, but the highest flight of

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comedy is the gaudy menagerie, with its thunder-throated steam organ, whose iron cadences batter out of hearing all rival blares and blasts of sound. On the platform stands the showman ; moleskin jacket with leopard skin collar ; oiled curls ; saw-voice tearingly vociferous. A rouged girl dances absently, her physical agility colliding violently with her inert and weary gaze. Her bespangled skirt of flaming plush shows a thready fringe of lamentable lingerie, and she wears white buckskin boots laced nearly knee-high. On each side of her are living gargoyles, down whose cheeks run rivers of grease-paint. One clown belabours a drum, and between the drum and the steam-organ stands on one leg a dirty stuffed pelican which crowns the incongruity of all this violently exploding movement and colour and sound.

I mount the steps, and as I pass the stuffed bird I start. It is not stuffed. It is alive. Its small, cold, round eye is open, and as I stare it winks. For me the whole bacchanal is focussed in the pelican's impassive eye. The organ shrieks, the drum blatters, the crowd sways and sweats ; yet this abominable dusty bird stands on its webbed foot immovably aloof, imperturbably disdainful, stiff and still as stone, an image of carven scorn.

And so into the menagerie, where I find the pelican's haughty indifference duplicated in every

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cage. Two doleful dromedaries gaze at us in velvet-eyed contempt flecked with pity. A row of seedy waxworks glare with glassy curiosity, making us wonder whether they have paid twopence to see us. Monkeys lounge and loll beside a dingo dog, a mournful, half-bald lion blinks blearily behind his bars; a blasé bear wobbles rhythmically like a furry pendulum; a wan and weary wolf yawns at a bored hyena. Also, behind a curtain, "The Giant Rat and the Bloodsucker"—a luscious pennyworth of horror.

But enough! It is time to obey the call chorussed in our ears all day. Let us go to "the old Bull and Bush." We trudge along the Spaniards Road, meeting melodious mænads, with arms interlaced, dancing four abreast. We pass performing soldier-dogs, one, with grey moustache, ludicrously like "Bobs." Here a sturdy fellow, with beer-glazed eyes, marches along playing a mouth-organ.

Now the riot and the revel smite ear and eye amain. It is the "Bull and Bush." An organ-grinder is grinding out the "Come, Come" chorus, and inside a packed ring (like the quadrille rings in Paris) four laughing girls are dancing daintily. Their hats feathered from brow to ear; their hair stuffed out in huge rolls over either cheek; their velvet gowns delicately lifted to show the stiff starched white petticoat; round their

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plump throats massy pearl necklaces ; in their ears ponderous earrings ; their young faces flushed, their eyes bright with gaiety ; their tiny feet delicately shod, toes pointed, heels high and curved—they are the fairest and freshest of naiads and dryads. Under the tightening cambric bodice the young bosom swells as the lithe young body sways back in a wild cake-walk. “ Go on, Annie ! ” cries a cockney youth. The dancers shriek and laugh and sing. The wine of life is on their rosy lips. In them we see the rhythmic undulation of all the passions in the world. We catch the old ecstasy that is always young. As for me, my eyes fill with hot tears, my flesh tingles with wonder. I see the eternal romance of eternal life while the organ gurgles into a languid waltz, and the couples swing and sway with half-closed eyes.

As I depart I see a poor hunchback under a dusty tree. He is teasing a tethered donkey. Oh, my brethren, the mad pity and the wild beauty of you and me !



## RECOVERING FROM WHITSUNTIDE

**W**HITSUNTIDE is over, and at this moment several million hearts are bowed down. If I were asked to say what is the most miserable mood in the life of a man, I should reply that it is the mood in which a man comes back from a brief holiday. It is easy to return to the desk after a long holiday. You have tired yourself out with amusement, and you feel a blithe relief at the prospect of flinging yourself into your daily round and common task. Work has become almost a novelty to your sated soul. The long days on the beach or the moor have grown wearisome, and the strain of protracted idleness has become unbearable. You yearn to escape from the monotony of indolence and the perpetual proximity of your friends. The holiday appetite does not grow with eating. It is glutted with frivolity and cloyed with piers and pierrots. But the Whitsuntide holiday is not long enough to satiate the pleasure-seeker. He has not had time to turn away with disgust from the feast of liberty. He is torn from the joy of doing nothing before he has begun to fret and

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fume at the bore of having nothing to do. He is a slave who has not discovered the tedium of freedom. For a few jolly days he has tried to forget the existence of his chain, but just as he is beginning to succeed it is suddenly tightened, and the tyrant of duty drags him back from the sea-front, the golf-links, or the trout-stream. With a groan he returns, and unpacks his portmanteau with a bilious frown.

It is of no avail at this crisis to preach to him the gospel of work. He has tasted the bread of idleness, and he declines to listen patiently to your homily on the beauty of industry. The primal curse blackens his spirit. The greyness of life wounds him. Work is a habit, and he has got out of it. He finds it as hard to get into it as a diver who is getting into a diving-suit for the first time. The blessing of habit is that it prevents you from seeing the trivial details of life. It narcotises your critical faculty. It keeps you from brooding over the ridiculous absurdity of the necessary unnecessary. It bathes you in oblivion. But a short holiday opens your eyes to everything. You have stayed at a hotel where the routine of life is different from the routine of home. You get up at a different hour in a different bedroom. You shave before a different glass. You splash in a different bath. You drink different coffee out of a different cup. You eat your dinner off different

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plates with different knives and forks. You see different faces. You feel a new man in a new world. You do not catch the same old train in the morning and the same old train in the evening. You do not eat the same old lunch in the same old restaurant. You do not wear the horrible old top-hat and those too familiar patent boots. You are in tweeds or flannels, and probably you have a dozen new ties. You read a new newspaper and you doze over a new novel. You do not see the same old London sky leaning on the same old London roofs. You do not smell the same old motor-buses, trailing their noisome clouds of vapour along the City asphalt. Your eyes open wide as you gaze at blue clouds that do not stink and at sky that is not decorated with telephone wires and chimney-cowls.

It is bitterly hard to come back to all the old things that you had never noticed before you went away. You are filled with hatred of your very doormat and hallstand. Your umbrella annoys you, and the patient aspect of your furniture infuriates you. The chairs in your dining-room stand as if they had no desire to do anything else but stand for ever. The clock ticks as if it had no ambition to achieve anything higher than ticking. The pictures hang on the wall as if they cared for nothing but hanging. The old wall-paper is content to stick to the old wall in the old way.

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The old carpet is resigned to its lot. It does not ask to be a wall-paper any more than the wall-paper asks to be a carpet. The ornaments on the mantelpiece shows no symptoms of rebellion. The stair rods on the stairs are cheerfully doing what they have always done. Everything save you is sunk in acceptance of fate. The stupendous patience of inanimate objects maddens you. Must you be even as they? Must you school yourself to emulate the fortitude of your fender, and the phlegm of your coalscuttle? Must you lead the uneventful life of your door-knocker? Ah, it is too much. Your soul sickens within you as you stare down a vista of duplicated days. Your habits howl at you like a ring of wild beasts watching a man who is nodding over a fire. By and by you will fall asleep, and they will devour you.

How long does the post-holiday gloom last? It depends upon your temperament. The first day is usually the worst. Everything goes wrong. When you open your eyes in the morning you forget that you have come back, until the things in the bedroom begin to talk. They chuckle over your discomfiture. "My boy," they say, "we have got you again." It is no use grumbling. They have got you. Everything has got you, from the postman's knock to the breakfast bell. Your bacon and eggs have got you. Heavens! How often have you eaten that rasher, and yet

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here it is again, not in the least fatigued with being eaten. Here, too, is the marmalade. Good gracious! You must have swallowed seas of marmalade. The assault of the usual rages all day with unabated fury. Your office stool does not betray the faintest spasm of surprise when you sit down on it. Little it recks of holidays. It is a passionless creature. It does not care whether you sit on it or not. It is complacently happy or unhappy, or whatever it is the nature of office stools to be. Your pens are callously calm, and your ink-pot allows you to take off its hinged hat without comment. There is a little dust on the collar of your office coat, but if you ask it how it spent Whitsuntide, it will give your soul a dusty answer. Perhaps it is unreasonable to look for solace from a round ebony ruler or a pincushion. But your coat is an old friend to whom you naturally look for sympathy and consolation. What your body is to your soul your coat is to your body. You have grown to fit it and it has grown to fit you. It is a rough mould of your torso, and as you slip your arms into the sleeves you feel the years that the locust has eaten in the lining. It is part of your hopes and fears, your exultations and despairs. To you it will turn in your dejection. Surely its old buttons will whisper a word of comfort. It is a fond delusion. Your old coat is as indifferent as your blotting-pad. It is not moved by your

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sorrows. It would not feel a pang if you never wiped your pen on it again. It is at ease on its peg. It has no more heart than your nail-brush.

Fortunately, the bloom of the holiday wears off very quickly. You rapidly repetrify yourself. Perchance you stay your desolate soul with a game of chess or draughts or dominoes in an A. B. C. or a Mecca. The Double Six, the Knight, and the Bishop are always ready to obey your orders. The King and Queen are your very humble and most obedient servants. In your hour of need you can fall back with confidence upon your Castle. Wonderful are the gentle devices wherewith the hungry spirit appeases its passion for variety. A game of billiards quells many a revolt against the heavy irony of life. It does not matter very much what you do so long as you do something else. The sense of escape is cheaply purchased. Even street accidents are useful, and a horse never falls without breaking the monotony of existence for a small crowd. When all else fails you can read the newspaper, which reveals every day the existence of strange beings who are privileged to murder or be murdered, to marry or to be divorced, to steal hatfuls of diamonds in Hatton Garden, to own racehorses or theatres, to live in Mayfair and die in motor smashes. Thus, by slow degrees, you forget your temporary nostalgia, and regain your customary affection for the usually usual and

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the as-you-were-ness-of-as-you-are. You button your braces without regret and lace your boots without remorse. The fairyland, where men always do what they please and are always pleased by what they do, fades far away like the song of the nightingale, and you become your good grey self. You are like Thackeray's retired captain who "surveyed the storm as being another gentleman's business." You cease to make overdrafts on the bank of life. Your imagination turns over and goes asleep. You do your duty without knowing it, and you no longer feel the spur of incongruity. It is upon honest fellows like you that the stability of the State is based. You are a part of the gyroscope that keeps civilization running on its mono-rail. There is a great faculty of patience in you, in spite of your Whitsuntide insurrection. Deep is the divine contentment of the serene lamp-post and the imperturbable pillar-box, but after all it is not deeper or more divine than yours. For they are never called upon to recover from a holiday, while you perform that miracle at least four times in the year.

## HALF A MILLION

A GOOD newspaper might be made every day out of the things that are not in the newspapers. We are so accustomed to take the news in our newspapers for granted that we forget that the news depends to a great extent upon the newsgatherers. News is like the manna in the wilderness. It must be gathered. If it is not gathered it melts away. Newspapers are always empty on Bank holidays, not because the supply of news has failed, but because the newsmakers are idle. There are some events which report themselves. There are others which must be excavated by trained excavators. The appetite for news is quite modern. Like all other appetites it grows with what it feeds on. The supply increases the demand. It is a curious fact that the collection of news depends upon the activity of a very small class. The ordinary man does not send news to newspapers.

I happened to be in town on Bank Holiday, and it occurred to me that it would be interesting and exciting to go to the Exhibition to see the holiday



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crowd. If it had not been a Bank Holiday the newspapers would have photographed and described the stupendous multitude. The mobilization of nearly half a million people in one spot is a sensational occurrence. I doubt whether it has ever been seen in London before. But it was baldly and briefly dismissed for the simple reason that journalists, like other people, like to take a holiday when they can. Such a spectacle as I saw will not be seen again for many a year.

When I entered the Exhibition in the afternoon I found it in a submerged condition. The White City was blotted out with human beings. The walls were visible, but no more. The broad avenues and spacious courts were covered with dense, sluggishly heaving masses of humanity. The density of the moving multitude was extraordinary. It was not a motionless density, but a thick, clotted, treacly fluid that seemed to be stirred heavily round and round by an unseen giant spoon wielded by an unseen giant. Round and round the viscous rivers of humanity turned and twisted. There was no sane or coherent plan or purpose in their movement. They swirled and eddied to and fro, back and forth, up and down, across and along.

Viewed as a whole, the multitude looked like a flowing and ebbing tide, troubled and tormented by some mysterious force that drew it hither and

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thither. The vague vastness of it stunned the mind. One felt that this was the appearance of mankind as an aggregate, not a lovely apparition, but a dull, oppressive, drowsy monster, wallowing and groping and fumbling and stumbling in a dream.

The sun beat down with sullen fierceness upon the moving acres of humanity. The lungs of the strange, writhing creature seemed to suck the clean air out of the small cup of hot blue sky laid against its enormous mouth. It may sound incredible, but the air in the vast White City was as foul as the air in a theatre or a dosshouse. It tasted bad, as if it had been breathed and rebreathed for hours by hundreds of thousands. The pure air above could not force its way down into that huge hollow dish of human beings. The polluted air in the dish could not force its way out or up. By some freak of the atmospheric conditions the multitude was stifled with its own breath. There was no relief and no alleviation.

As there were only a few seats, the multitude could not sit down. It was compelled to move, and as it moved wearily it sweated in the sickening sunlight. The human smell was overpowering, overwhelming, almost appalling. It penetrated the Garden Club. It saturated Paillard's. It hung like a damp pall over the waterways. It rose to the height of the Flip-Flap. I have

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smelled all sorts of crowds, from the Cup crowd at the Crystal Palace to the Derby crowd. But the odour of this crowd was quite different. It was not the odour of the unwashed, but simply the concentrated odour of humanity, a sharp, salt, pungent odour as distinctive as the odour of cows in a byre or of horses in a stable or of dogs in a kennel. It struck me as strange that humanity should have an odour of its own, though I have no doubt animals are familiar with it.

The multitude was infinitely weary, horribly tired. I do not know how many people fainted, but I do know that I saw ambulances being hurried to and fro by anxious policemen. Before my own eyes a strong young man suddenly fell like a pole-axed ox. He was lifted to his feet. An ambulance man came up, felt his pulse, and without a second's hesitation slung him across his shoulders like a sack of flour, his head and hands dangling down over his right shoulder, his trunk resting on his shoulder-blades, and his legs dangling over his left shoulder. With wonderful skill the ambulance man ran through the parting crowd with his heavy burden. The man carrying the man—was he not a symbol of civilization, in which every man is carrying another man on his shoulders?

The longer I studied that immense multitude the more keenly I felt its pathos. It was composed of very simple folk, capable of only the simplest

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moods and emotions. Their silence and their sobriety amazed me. I did not see one drunken man or one drunken woman. Nay, I failed to detect even the vaguest vestige of intoxication. The decorum of the people was touching. Their gentle acquiescence was in a way almost tragic.

It suggested the patience—the divine patience—the resignation—the sublime resignation—of humanity. There were many pale mothers carrying fatigued infants, whose thin pendant legs told the old tale of malnutrition. As I watched these weary mothers I wondered why the poor consent to carry on the business of providing citizens for the State. Then I thought of the scanty pleasures of the poor, and marvelled at their fortitude and their forbearance. Those mild, meek masses, moving heavily hour after hour, were only a projection of the immeasurable bulk of humanity whose days are grey with toil. Behind the white towers I could see in a vision the innumerable host of common, drab, obscure men and women and children winding round the world. The pity of it was unbearable, because they were unconscious of the pity. Humanity would be less tragic if it were less ignorant. The crowning touch of tragedy was the music. They drank it as dry soil drinks rain. And they all went home with a beautifully patient gentleness. Half a million of them !

## THE CHRISTMAS CURMUDGEON

**A**RE you a curmudgeon? If so, you are out of season. Curmudging cannot be tolerated in London at Christmas. Let them curmudge all the year round, but there must be no curmudging at Yuletide. The curmudgeon, like Toussaint L'Ouverture, is "the most unhappy of men." He has a full purse and an empty heart. I am always sorry for the poor curmudgeon at this time of the year. Father Christmas is very hard on him. He robs him right and left. He makes his money run out at the heels of his boots. He prises open his closed fists with a red-hot chisel. He cuts holes in his pockets. He drags him into toy-shops and forces him to buy expensive gifts for his nephews and nieces. And the more the curmudgeon spends the more miserable he becomes. It is not always more blessed to give than to receive. The curmudgeon is generous without joy. He neither eats his cake nor has it. His gifts leave an open wound in his heart. He is too mean to taste the flavour of gratitude. He cannot feel the joy of anticipated joy. We need a word to express the

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emotion of the true gift-giver before and after he gives his gift. His frame of mind is enviable. It is good-nature gazing at itself in the glass, and revelling in the happiness it is about to create. It is more than magnanimity. It is Yulanimity. It is Yuleficence. It is Yulevolence. Let us all be unanimously Yulanimous, and Yuleficient, and Yulevolent.

There are many kinds of curmudgeons. There is the old-fashioned curmudgeon that Dickens drew in his "Christmas Carol." I like the old-fashioned curmudgeon. Scrooge's bark was worse than his bite. "If I could work my will," he said, "every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding with a stake of holly in his heart." A glorious death! How could a man die better? But, bless my soul, Scrooge was only pretending to curmudge. He was only playing up to Dickens. He knew all the time that he was going to buy that prize turkey, and raise Bob Cratchit's salary, and be a second father to Tiny Tim.

I wish we had more curmudgeons like Mr. Scrooge. But Dickens is dead and Scrooge is no more. Those fierce old screws who suddenly burst into a shower of Christmas boxes are obsolete. Dead and gone are all those quixotic misers and extravagant skinflints. I drink to their memory. I sigh for their stingy prodigality and genial

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ferocity. They were all Father Christmasses in disguise.

The modern curmudgeon does not play up to Dickens. He sneers at him. He has a heart like a dried pea. His nose is not pointed, his cheek is not shrivelled, his lips are not blue, and there is no frosty rime on his head. He is plump and sleek. He does not pinch and scrape. He spends his money freely—on himself. He is a very superior person. He thinks that the humour of Dickens is low and his sentiment maudlin. He regards Christmas as a vulgar bore. His delicate taste is offended by the corpses of cows that garland with scarlet and ivory the aisles of Smithfield Market. He shudders as he passes a butcher's shop. He poohs-poohs the gospel of good cheer. He gibes at the good old times. He says that holly is a middle-class shrub, and he regards the mistletoe as a badge of Philistia.

He curmudges against Christmas fare. He is an epicure who shudders at roast beef and plum-pudding. He prefers plovers' eggs and ortolans, caviare and quails. He is eaten up with selfishness. He is covertly insolent to his host and his hostess. He is rude to women who are not rich or young or pretty. He has no use for the obscure or the poor. He worships success and tramples on failure. He declaims against indiscriminate charity. He does not subscribe to the Charity

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Organization Society, but he approves of its frigid principles. He hates organ-grinders, crossing-sweepers, newsboys, itinerant musicians, beggars, and blind men with dogs. He loathes the practice of tipping, and writes to *The Times* to denounce dustmen and postmen who dare to ask him for a Christmas box. He has never a good word for a cabman or a railway porter or a waiter.

He detests carol-singers. They spoil his appetite. He does his best to kill everything that is picturesquely unreasonable and romantically illogical. A merry rout of boys with their Guy on the Fifth of November provokes his wrath. He never flings a copper to a cab-tout or a messenger boy. He accepts little services without acknowledgment. Three ghosts sufficed to soften the heart of Scrooge, but three hundred ghosts would not mollify the selfishness of the modern curmudgeon. It would be a pity not to pity him.

The modern curmudgeon at his worst is a literary prig. He is incapable of simple happiness. He smiles with lofty disdain upon domestic joys. "There is no place like home," he says, "and a good job, too." He sneers at the husband who does not neglect his wife. He informs you that relatives are a nuisance. He has no Lares and no Penates. To him the fireside is a symbol of ennui. He will tell you that children are little savages. He calls them brats. All the year round he can



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keep the children in their place, but when Christmas comes the children overwhelm him. Christmas is Childmas. The tyranny of life is for a while suspended. The chains are shaken off the rosy limbs, and the gags taken out of the rosy mouths. From a hundred thousand schools the boys and girls come laughing and leaping, their eyes bright with hope, their hearts bounding with expectation. I can see these jolly regiments of infantry marching gaily through merrie England. They are blowing tin trumpets and beating tiny drums. They are waving flags. They have broken out of gaol, and they are moving in long, glittering, undulating columns to the conquest of Toyland, Candyland, Pieland, and Fairyland. Father Christmas is striding at the head of this frolicsome army. He is cracking jokes with his young Field Marshals and his baby Brigadiers, his toddling Colonels and his creeping Captains. The literary curmudgeon hears the rhythmical tramp of this great host. His heart sinks. He curses. He flies to Monte Carlo, and is plucked cleaner than the turkey he did not send to his poor relations.

But I hope there are not many of these curmudgeons, after all. I wish the Census would throw some light upon the point. The worst of the Census is that it tells you everything that you do do not want to know. It is silent on all the furiously interesting subjects. I beg the Registrar-

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General to rule a column in his next Census paper, and put at the head of it this question : " Are you a curmudgeon ? " The Americans, in their charmingly childish way, have made a bright start in this branch of sociology. They ask their guests to answer exciting riddles, such as " Are you a Polygamist ? " " Are you an Anarchist ? " " Are you a Mormon ? " These are genuine, old-fashioned Christmas riddles. They are modelled on the clown's poser, " Do you still beat your wife ? " And, by the way, let me plead for a renaissance of the riddle. A Christmas without riddles is a starveling affair. The charm of a riddle is that it fills a Christmas gathering with the spirit of nonsense. Children are ecstatically right in their love of nonsense, and we ought to emulate them. It is very sad to see a merry boy vainly imploring a fishy-eyed, over-fed uncle to tell him a story or ask him a riddle. The fat-minded old fool cannot think of a silly tale or a foolish riddle. His imagination is clotted. Heaven help him !

There is another old joy of which children ought not to be robbed—the joy of games. I grieve over the decadence of our old Christmas games. They are fast fading from our memory. The modern father and mother do not play with their children. They leave the lonely youngsters to the nurse, who, as a rule, has no lore of nursery rhymes or nursery games. It is not enough to fill the nursery with

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dolls and dolls' houses, rocking-horses, steam-engines, and woolly bears. More precious than all these mechanical toys is the human toy. It ought to be the ambition of every man and every woman to be a worthy toy for some imperious child. A real father with real hair and a real beard is much more amusing than a Jack-in-the-box or a Golliwog or a monkey. And, in spite of her unwieldy size, a mother has eyes that open and shut more satisfactorily than a doll's. At Christmas we ought to allow our children to play with us as roughly as they like. If you are a true man you will not object to have your nose pulled or your beard uprooted.

Try to get rid of your sense of superiority. You are not really superior to a child. You are only a little nearer death. It will do the children good to play with you, but it will do you more good. It will freshen any youth you have left in you. It will start the withered pulse of wonder throbbing in your stodgy mind. It will lead you back into the clime of miracles. It is not easy to invent pleasure for grown-ups, but it is very easy to invent pleasure for children, and you feel a rarer delight in pleasing a child. There is no gross motive in your cajoleries. You can serve without being servile, and kneel without being abject. Every town ought to have a Toy Fund. Nay, every Board School ought to be a distributing agency for Santa Claus.

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I went on a toy-buying expedition the other day. I worked steadily through all the toy-shops from Holborn Circus to Oxford Circus, and glued against every window I found crowds of ragged children, their envious breath steaming on the plate-glass, their eyes sparkling with wonder and desire. My heart ached for these tiny outcasts, tantalised by an unattainable Paradise. I fancied that the glass eyes of the dolls grew dim with tears as they gazed at these small London Rachels, weeping for their children, and yearning in vain to take them in their arms and hush them to sleep. The doll without a child-mother is a pitiful sight, but it is not more pitiful than the child without a doll-daughter. Have compassion, good folk, on the motherless doll and the childless child. Fill those little empty arms. Comfort those little lonely hearts. Shall their treasure of tenderness be wasted on a knotted towel? Give them golden tow and waxen cheeks, a body with a squeak and fat jointed limbs, and clothes that can be taken off. Perhaps you will be rewarded on Christmas Eve with a heavenly vision of a sleeping angel with a one-and-elevenpenny infant clasped to her passionate breast.

## THE KING OF THE JEHUS

**I**T is a mistake to suppose that the Lord Mayor is the most important figure in the Lord Mayor's Show. I do not wish to belittle the sublimity of the Lord Mayor. I do not desire to speak disrespectfully of him. London without the Lord Mayor would be a wen in a wilderness. No other city in the world has a Lord Mayor who is worthy of being mentioned in the same breath as the Lord Mayor of London. But while I recognise the grandeur and the greatness of the Lord Mayor, I cannot admit he is the true hero of the Lord Mayor's Show. The true hero of the Lord Mayor's Show is the Lord Mayor's Coachman. He is the crown and culmination of all the pomp and pageantry which disorganises the traffic of London so gloriously once a year. It is for his sake, and for his sake alone, that torrents of vehicles are dammed. It is in his honour, and in his honour alone, that our men of business utter their annual imprecations. He, and he only, can lift a magnificent hand to arrest the rolling of a million wheels and to silence the thunder of a million hoofs. His voice, and

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his voice alone, can say to the tides of traffic, "Thus far, and no farther!" He is greater than King Canute.

The Lord Mayor's Coachman is the prop and stay of the Lord Mayor. Without him the Lord Mayor could not defy the claws of time. It is he who sheds upon the Lord Mayor the glamour of romance. There are many Lord Mayors, but there is only one Lord Mayor's Coachman. The Lord Mayors come and go, but he goes on for ever. They are but transient and embarrassed phantoms, but he is a solid and indestructible monument of flesh, compared to which St. Paul's Cathedral is a bride cake, the Tower of London an ice pudding, and Nelson's Pillar a stick of barley sugar.

The Lord Mayor is a dignity and a function, but the Lord Mayor's Coachman is more. He is a Man. He is a Personality. He is an Exalted Personage. Anybody could be a Lord Mayor, but is there one person in the world who could take the place of the Lord Mayor's Coachman? Speaking for myself, I should not shrink with terror from the task of being Lord Mayor. I can calmly contemplate a vista of eating and drinking steadily from November to November. I can bear the thought of having Kings and Prime Ministers as my guests. But I could not face the awful responsibilities of the Lord Mayor's Coachman. It may be that I am a coward, but I suspect that

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our best and our bravest would tremble if they were invited to take the reins of governance from those majestic hands.

The splendour of the Lord Mayor's Coach demands a Coachman of heroic dimensions. The Coach is vast, but the Coachman must be vaster still. I have never seen any man so vast as the Lord Mayor's Coachman. He is built out of innumerable generations of roast beef. The eye dwells joyously on his illimitable features, rolling and undulating like a rich landscape. His is not a haggard face. There is no care or anxiety in its gentle downs and benignant slopes. It is the face of a man who has achieved the summit of his ambition, and who possesses his soul in peace. Such a countenance, I imagine, was the countenance of Jove, what time he sat upon Olympus, gods and mortals trembling at his nod. But, with all due respect, I may be permitted to doubt whether the legs of Jove were as sublime as the peerless legs which London salutes once a year. There are many kinds of calf in this wonderful world, but there are no calves like the calves of the Lord Mayor's Coachman. They transcend the glories of the Calf of Man. They restore our confidence in England. They assure us that we are a nation yet. Upon these pillars of Hercules the British Empire is securely based.

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It may seem impious, but I am tempted to wonder whether the Lord Mayor's Coachman has a private life. Does he ever doff that resplendent livery? Does he ever unbuckle those effulgent shoes? Does he ever denude his legs of those voluptuous silk stockings? Does he ever take off that tremendous hat? Does he ever brush the powder from that Olympian head? Alas! It is to be feared he does, but, even when he is clothed in the vulgar garb of civilization, I am sure he preserves his imperial dignity. I like to think of him in the act of unbending, bestowing a tolerant smile upon those who have the privilege of being his friends. One may even figure him as condescending to smoke a pipe. It would, of course, be a pure churchwarden with a giant bowl and a sweeping shank. A cigarette in those titanic lips were inconceivable. It is not easy to decide what liquid is worthy of flowing down that regal, that more than regal throat, but perhaps the amber grandeur of Audit Ale would not altogether desecrate it.

If I may without irreverence go further, I should like to know something about the soul of the Lord Mayor's Coachman. His views of life would be profoundly interesting. I think he is an optimist, for there is no tinge of pessimism in his rubicund visage. There is no cynicism in that great heart which beats in harmony with the genial order of



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nature. I think the Lord Mayor's Coachman is a philosopher who belongs to the school of Falstaff, Rabelais and Dr. Pangloss, for I am sure he believes that everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

## SEEING THE SIGHTS

**I**T is hard to realize that there was a time in the history of mankind when there were no sights to be seen and no sightseers to see them. There were no guides or guide-books in the Garden of Eden, and Adam and Eve were not compelled to solve the problem of holidays. Indeed, they appear to have been perfectly satisfied with their garden. They did not leave it until they were driven out, and apparently it was necessary to adopt elaborate precautions to prevent their return. They were probably the only persons who were never bitten by the asp of travel. They did not go to theatres in the evening; they never yearned for supper at the Carlton or at the Savoy. They did not feel the necessity of inspecting ancient churches, crumbling ruins, or houses of famous men. They gave no dinner parties or dances, and what they did with their evenings it is difficult to imagine. They had positively no relatives whatever, and neither of them had a mother-in-law. Some people maintain that marriage without a mother-in-law is like beef without mustard, salad

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without vinegar, or pancakes without lemon. It certainly does seem that marriage without the advice and admonition of a scarred veteran must have been somewhat monotonous. But Adam and Eve appear to have lived the simplest life that has ever been lived on this earth without yearning for a week-end on the river or an afternoon in Westminster Abbey. They do not appear to have hungered for a week in lovely Lucerne or a month in Aix-les-Bains. They managed to rub along without a visit to Venice or Ostend, and they died without seeing the Eternal City. It is sad to think how much they missed, and one is tempted to wonder how they contrived to bear up.

Modern life is somewhat different from life in the Garden of Eden. We have discovered the virtue of variety, and the charm of change. We are everywhere by turns and nowhere long. We have turned toil into pleasure and pleasure into toil. No one works so hard as the pleasure-seeker. London is invaded every year by an army of sight-seers whose feats of endurance would make Hercules look like a statue of indolence. It is easy to recognize a sightseer, for he always wears a care-worn, haggard, hungry look. He is fighting against time and space. He is pursuing the past with nervous anxiety. He is afraid to gaze too long at St. Paul's lest he should not be able to see every stone in the Tower. He hurries hysterically

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from the mummies in the British Museum to the waxen phantoms in Madame Tussaud's. In the morning he eats shrimps at Greenwich, and in the afternoon he munches watercress at Kew. He can hardly masticate the delights of the Crystal Palace for thinking of the raptures that await him in the Zoo. Wherever he is he wishes to be somewhere else, and he is always tortured by the double fear of leaving too soon and arriving too late. His feverish parsimony of time leads him to telescope his meals, with the result that he is invariably racked by indigestion when he is not famished. He is a boon and a blessing to the bun-shop. There is no doubt that the bun was invented for sight-seers.

It is a mistake to suppose that sightseers do not enjoy sightseeing. They enjoy it after it is over. The pleasure of seeing monuments and tombs is based upon the curious passion of human beings for being superior to their fellow creatures. The mere act of gazing at the regalia in the Tower is not thrilling, but the gazer looks forward to the joy of telling his friends who have never seen the regalia that he has seen them. He knows that they will envy him, and the consciousness of their future envy compensates him for the toil and trouble. A being who has seen something which you have not seen can give himself airs, even if the thing which he has seen is not worth seeing at all. The

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worst of it is that the world now contains more things than can be seen comfortably by the most industrious sightseer. We have lost the habit of blotting out cities and destroying sepulchres and pulling down cathedrals. We preserve everything. The consequence is that the world is being choked with historical lumber. Before long we shall not have room to move about, and the trail of famous men will be over every brick. We have lost the gift of forgetfulness, and Oblivion finds her occupation gone.

Americans are probably the most laborious sightseers in the world. They have a capacity for detail which arouses my reverence. They do Europe as it has never been done by any other race. As a rule a Londoner knows nothing whatever about London, and I often blush with shame when an American friend demonstrates that he has seen more of London in a week than I have seen in a lifetime. It is humiliating to be obliged to confess that you do not know the best way to unearth Hampton Court or the Mint. The truth is, London is a gigantic mistake. Its sights are too far apart. It usually takes half a day to reach one of them, and half a day to get back. The sights of London ought to be concentrated. It would be a public boon if the Government were to bring in a bill for the collection of sights into some accessible spot. Hyde Park would probably be the best piece of

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waste ground for the purpose. No doubt the expense involved in the transportation of all the London sights to Hyde Park would be considerable, but think of the saving of time, not only for our visitors, but also for their conductors. St. Paul's would look very well at the Marble Arch ; beside it the Tower might be placed, together with Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament. There would be room along the banks of the Serpentine for the British Museum and the National Gallery, together with a few trifles like the Guildhall, Cleopatra's Needle, the Nelson Monument, and the Crystal Palace. There would be plenty of room for the Zoo in Kensington Gardens, and Madame Tussaud's would add to the attractions of Rotten Row. Electric trams might run round the circuit of the sights, and in this way it would be possible to do them all in an afternoon, thus leaving the sightseer a margin for the pursuit of pleasure.

I do not know whether there would be any space left after this desirable improvement had been carried out, but if possible an endeavour ought to be made to shift Stratford-on-Avon nearer London. It would be very convenient for American visitors in a hurry if Shakespeare's birthplace could be removed to St. James's Park, together with Ann Hathaway's cottage and any other equally authentic relics. Room might also be found for a few

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of the stately homes of England, such as Chatsworth and Haddon Hall. Edinburgh might be induced to part with Holyrood Palace for a consideration, and it is possible that Ireland might be persuaded to give up Dublin Castle, together with a few yards of the Giant's Causeway. In this way the strain of a visit to the old country might be materially lessened.

Unless something of this kind is done, and done at once, I fear there is a danger that Americans may give up the habit of sightseeing. I know one American who has crossed the Atlantic thirteen times and visited London for thirteen successive years without seeing a single sight. He spends his life in his hotel, in theatres, in music halls, and in restaurants. The other day I reproached him bitterly for neglecting his opportunities, but he flippantly replied that he preferred death to Westminster Abbey. He pointed out that Nelson and other great Englishmen did not go to Westminster Abbey until they died, and added that what was good enough for Nelson was good enough for him. Thereupon I asked him why he took the trouble to come to London at all, seeing that he lives exactly the same life as he lives in New York. He retorted that he came to London to see our bad plays, but I reminded him that he could see them later in New York. As to our hotels and restaurants, he was obliged to admit that they success-

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fully reproduce the American atmosphere, and that when he sat down to dinner or supper in London he felt quite at home. Even the "Cheshire Cheese" was full of the American accent when he visited it, as is his agreeable custom during his stay in London. I told him that the "Cheshire Cheese" had become quite an American institution, but he said he was sorry to find that the Japanese were beginning to frequent it. I was surprised to find him rather sore on this point. He was astonished to learn that the Japanese are almost as popular in this country as Americans. He said that Americans regarded the Japanese as coloured folk, and predicted that it would be necessary to give them a licking like the Spaniards. He said that it was a bad sign to see so many Japanese in London. He complained because he had met them in theatres, in restaurants, at Ranelagh, at Hurlingham, and at Henley.

"At any rate," said I, "it was plucky of them to go to a wet Henley." But he shook his head grimly and declared that the Japanese ought to stick to Japan. I suggested that the Americans would be offended if advised to stick to America.

"Not at all," said he. "Europe is only an American summer resort."

"Well," said I, "so long as you do not make it a winter resort, we will not complain."



## BEHIND THE SCENES

OUR hansom jingles out of Piccadilly Circus, past the Haymarket, into Leicester Square through a maelstrom of feverish lights and tangled vehicles and hurrying faces. The pulse of pleasure is beating fast. Through the trees flames the many-windowed Alhambra, its Moorish façade soaring like a phantom palace into the sky, its pallid minarets and fiery crescent moons crowning ghostly walls of ivory and gold. The stars, peering through the violet gloom, seem to be a part of the delicate fabric. It is a torch brandished by London in the night, the torch of passion in the night of dreams.

We go through the alcoved corridors past the tall janissaries, into the promenade. It is a seraglio where man is a sultan and woman a houri. It is aglow with dim lamps, soft with the susurrus of silks, languorous with subtle perfumes. Miles away below us the ballet languishes in its golden frame. We are in Lotus-land. The world dissolves in a swoon of delight. Life is a sunshot cloud. Black care is forgotten. In a trance we

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descend the stairs and sink into a luxurious stall made for the postprandial Nirvana that muffles the soul. Lolling lazily in its depths, you let your charmed fancy float along the ballet's voluptuous stream of living music and moving sound.

The vast theatre is tapestried with faces. The air is aromatic with the fragrance of innumerable cigars. It is a temple of fumes. The pungent odour saturates you. You are a leaf in the heart of a giant cheroot. The glittering dome is full of ascending wreaths of smoke. Even the ballet is a ballet of tobacco, "My Lady Nicotine." It is a fragile fantasy of melting curves and woven hues and iridescent cadences, sound and movement and colour kaleidoscoping into a mist of painting and music, sculpture and poetry, that shadows forth the vague irregular rhythm of visionary life. The eye is sated with silent colour and the ear with coloured sound. The dancers are syllables in a visible song, vowels in a breathing lyric, rhymes in a laughing villanelle. They are the gestures of an artificial femininity. The civilized woman is always artificial, but here her artificiality is multiplied. A woman is natural only when she is alone. She wears the armour of artifice in public, and the aim of the ballet is to generalize her artificiality. It submerges her in a long undulation of fluent femininity. As you gaze at the ballet you see life responding to your desires.

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Your every-day self fades into a paradise of ethereal rapture where the moments fall like rose-leaves into the lap of time.

Let us go behind the scenes and walk in this fairyland. An iron door swings open, and we stand beside the ballet-mistress in a tiny nook between the edge of the proscenium and the painted side-scene. There is a spy-hole in the projecting wing. Through it we see a fragment of the ballet in profile. It shatters the illusion which we carried with us from the stalls. It is like looking at an oil painting with your nose on the canvas. You see the dancers in isolated patches. Their *maquillage* is fantastic. The rouged lips, the painted cheeks, the pencilled eyebrows, the bistrred eyes, the blackened eyelashes, the pearl powder, the gaudy skirts, the stretched texture of thighs, the threads of hose, the tired mechanical air, the anxious solemnity of effort, the sidelong glances, the little slips and hitches, the unsubstantial scenery trembling like a house of cards, the muttered admonitions of the ballet-mistress, the cryptic activities of the stage-manager and his underlings, the groups of dancers waiting for their cue, the wisps of French and Italian chatter, the human grotesquery of the dancer who is Death on the stage and Signor Rossi off it, the jumble of mimic and real life—all this upsets your centre of levity and plunges you into a brief

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insanity. You begin to doubt your own reality. You lose your sense of values. You are in Topsy-turvyland. Anything might happen here. You might turn into a coryphée and dive into these advancing and retreating files whose limbs are flickering and wavering in a meaningless maze.

Where is the magic flown? Where is the enchantment? Where is the romance? Here is nothing but whimsical reality. These dancers are not conscious of the witchery which haunted you in the stalls. They are only the shining shuttles and the gleaming yarns. There is no gaiety in their eyes. They are toiling in a labyrinth of rhythms. As they swing round in faultless files their eyes turn anxiously to the ballet-mistress. She whispers "Go!" and the poised limbs sweep forward, line after line. A little sprite loses her place in the whirlpool. Her frightened eyes flash timidly towards the spyhole. She hears the low rebuke, murmurs a shy appeal, and eddies off again into the spray and foam of flying feet. She is a dancer lost in the delirium of the dance. It is a shock to go behind the scenes. It is like meeting a poet at a dinner party. Your dream cracks. Here beauty is business, and the oddest thing is your own incongruity. You are ashamed of your dress clothes. These dancers in short skirts are absolutely unconscious. They are as natural as schoolgirls in bathing-costumes, as non-

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chalant as babies. They are at ease in their convention. Probably they blush when they don the garb of the outer world.

But let us sift our impressions. First of all, note that the conventional idea of what goes on behind the scenes is false. All the sensuousness is before the footlights. There is none behind them. Here one finds nothing but cold order and frigid discipline. Where are the gilded youth? There is no room for them. Where is the fabled immodesty in these tired girls who are earning their bread? They have been rehearsing all day, and one of them is sulking because she cannot get a half-holiday to-morrow! Pathos, if you like, but no lubricity. These little painted angels are but the colours on your palette, but the threads in your woven dream. Think kindly of them, and remember that evil is a maggot in the imagination.

Charity never errs. While we watch, a great humility takes hold of us. We, too, are in the ballet of life. We, too, are dancers moving to a tune played by an invisible orchestra led by an unknown conductor. What essential difference is there between these figurantes and our philosophers, our statesmen, our soldiers, our lawyers, our doctors, our poets, and our kings? Thank God, there is none. For us all the curtain will be rung down and the footlights will go out. For us all

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the empty theatre and the silence and the going home through the night. And who watches us from the wings through the peephole of destiny ? Who pays us our wages after our dance is done ? As we pass through the iron door the humour of life is salt on our lips, for we taste our own tears. Well, there is some solace in being able to be sorry for yourself. Man, alone among the animals, has the gift of self-pity and self-derision. He is both actor and spectator. He can see his own absurdity. Yet perhaps the subtlest jest in the comedy is the humour of humour, and the richest joke of all may be the joke of seeing through the joke. There may be something higher than the humour and something deeper than the joke ! Perhaps the ballet of this world is real, after all.

## ADELINE GENÉE

**A**RT is the austerity of joy. Adeline Genée is a joyous austerity. She is not bewilderingly beautiful. She is devoid of sensuous charm or voluptuous appeal. You would pass her in the street without suspecting her genius. She is an artist who expresses herself only in the dance. As she stands in the wings the strange romantic change begins to steal over her, and the magic that is stored in her brain and her blood pulses into her limbs. Then a birdlike swoop and she passes out of prose into poetry. As she flickers like a butterfly into the limelight she flashes into enchanting life. She ceases to be an ordinary woman and becomes the embodiment of idyllic joy. All the innocent gaiety of the sunlight sparkles in her eyes. All the fresh freedom of the wind and the leaves trembles in her gestures. All the careless fragrance of a wild flower seems to flow from her wavering fingers. She is cool vitality without passion, sweet grace without innuendo, elfish mirth without ribaldry. There is a great gulf between her and such dancers as Otéro and

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Tortajada. They are the animal appetites, the hot senses, the fierce desires. They mimic the swift fury of sensual delight. She is a serene sentiment, a clear fantasy, an untroubled dream. Her coquetry is roguishly pure and impishly chaste. She is a virginal romp with the bright energy of Diana and the fleet witchery of Atalanta. She has the uncorrupted archness of Rosalind and the mischievous fun of Lady Teazle. Her dancing is an ebullience of unsaddened youth, a spontaneous riot of girlish excitement woven into a lovely pattern of merry pirouettes and flowing arabesques, rounded limbs and airy attitudes, light leaps and sallies and twinkling *entrechats*. The intricate notes of her dancing melt into a visible music as the waves melt into the sea. Her technical skill conceals itself in her temperament, for she uses her temperament to express her health and her hope and her high spirits, her delight in being alive, her exultation in things as they are and in herself as she is.

The charm of Genée is more than the charm of rhythmical movement. It is the charm of life that is at one with life, of happiness that is happy, of contentment that is content. From her laughing curls that toss round her laughing face to the tips of her laughing fingers and the tips of her laughing toes she is an image of joy. Her laughing face is a mask of joy, and when I see it I always



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think of her as the living spirit of comedy, so airy is the joy that laughs in her laughing blue eyes and her laughing teeth and her laughing lips. Hers is a contagious joy that catches you by the hand and whirls you off into a romantic world where there is no stupidity and no weariness, no tears of conscience and no sighs of memory. You escape with her from the cry of the flesh as well as from the cry of the soul. You are alive with life and young with youth and in love with love in the land east of the sun and west of the moon where all you would be you are for one breathless moment. You feel her calling you out of the slough of existence, and you stumble clumsily after her, fascinated by her candid, laughing eyes and her candid, laughing mouth, and her laughing valiancy of candid grace. The music seems to flow under her feet like the water under the wings of a skimming swallow. It echoes her swift speed and darting lightness. It follows her like a shadow. It is part of her and she is part of it, and when it ceases you feel that she too should fade slowly into an invisible silence, dying with the music and living with it, as a shadow dies and lives with the sun.

Genée is a great mime as well as a great dancer. She is an artist in poetic silence as well as an artist in poetic movement. Her face is a dancing mask of moods, changing gaily with the music and inter-

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preting all its thistledown whims and cobweb caprices. Her mouth can pout deliciously and her eyebrows can frown adorably, but the pout and the frown go as lightly as they come, for her anger and her disdain are only little parodies and tiny burlesques of passion, made but to be unmade, blown into being but to be broken like bubbles in the sun. Her features play pranks with life, weaving its ambitions into a fairy gossamer of unreality, and mocking its tragic passions with an irreverent impudence. Nothing seems to matter in her travesty of human solemnity. Love turns into a dreamy game as she imitates its hopes and fears and yearnings and regrets in a revel of physical badinage. There is a merry irony in her rapture and in her despair, and she eludes the burden of pleasure as featly as the burden of pain. All the emotions are fugitive in her face, and she fills you with a sense of spiritual escape. The chains of time fall from your soul and you glide into a vague trance of liberty that is like a waking dream. It is the trance of poetry in which the thorns of fact and event and environment no longer wound you, for you forget that you are caught in the thicket of life. For a moment you are mixed with the music of things. You are free from the tyranny of thought and the cruelty of knowledge. Her permanent smile is like a prolonged moment of bliss. It seems for a brief while to hold life at bay

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and fate at arm's length. She is a symbol of joy that triumphs over the dullness of duty and the boredom of routine. She is mockingly different and her mocking difference is reflected dimly in you. With a laughing gesture she dismisses the universe and all its wisdom and all its folly, and you accept her laughing gesture in the rare mood of Christopher Sly. "Let the world slide!" Let the puzzles and the problems go. Let the enigmas of the heart and the riddles of the soul fade into a vapour. Let the torment of desire wane with the torture of regret. Let the will to live and the will to die melt into a gay acceptance of everything that is and everything that is not. "Let the world slide!"

The art of Genée is based upon austerity. She is the antithesis of the popular conception of a dancer. Her art governs her life. Her beauty of gesture and grace conceals itself under a robe of sackcloth. She is ascetic and severe. She is always in arduous training. She practises for hours every day in a room walled with mirrors. She is a rigid teetotaler. She dines frugally at three in the afternoon, and starves till midnight, allowing herself only a cup of coffee at six. That life of martyrdom is the price she pays for her strength and her grace. Her skill is made out of infinite self-denial. This miracle of laughing joy is the product of bitter toil and iron renunciation. Behind her radiant

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ecstasy of light gestures and postures is the stern hardship of an athlete and the passionless devotion of a nun. It is the paradox of the artist, for only through absolute singleness of aim can supreme mastery be achieved. In order to get one great thing you must give up all the little things.

Here is another paradox. Genée is never tired when she dances, and she dances best in summer. While she is dancing her feet never blister, but if she takes a holiday, and foregoes her daily practice they are blistered in a few days. She cannot dance in a ballroom, for she grows giddy after a few turns in a waltz. Dancing is the only gymnastic exercise she can safely indulge in, for golf or cycling or tennis would harden the muscles and destroy the soft suppleness of the arms. She detests long skirts because they conceal the complicated pattern of the dance. She hates high heels because they destroy the delicate flexibility of the ankle and the instep. For her the dance is the vehicle of all delight. Her little feet are lyrical. They sing in a language of their own. It is the song of the throbbing lark that beats its wings in cloudland between the earth and the sky. "Let the world slide!"

## LILY ELSIE

ONE of the most popular actresses of the hour is Lily Elsie. She is the star of stars in the changing firmament of musical comedy. Yesterday she was hardly known, but when she appeared as "The Merry Widow" she stepped straight into fame. The rumour of her charm spread magically from mouth to mouth in that mysterious fashion which makes the fortune of a player. It is not the newspaper that creates popularity: it does not make it. I have seen many attempts to boom an actor into fame, but the public is as obstinate as a mule. It will not be dragooned into admiration. The only real popularity is that which is based upon private talk. It is what men and women are saying to each other in idle gossip that makes or mars the fate of a player. Mr. George Edwardes is a marvellous judge of these invisible currents of opinion. He can put his finger on the pulse of the public and count its beats. I have been told that he often sits in front among the audience and studies its symptoms. If anything or anybody appears to bore or tire or weary the

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audience he ruthlessly eliminates the offence or the offender. He makes the play and the players play up to the delicate mood of the pleasure-seekers who come to the theatre to be amused. That is the sole secret of his success. He is in touch with the world behind them. His gift of selective insight enables him to fit the part to the player and the player to the part. Lily Elsie is a case in point. She is more than the Sonia of the opera. She is the whole opera. She is the incarnation of its brightness and lightness, its amorous grace, its joyous sentiment, and its slumbering passion. She appeals to the erotic romance that is hidden in the heart of every playgoer, even when it is bruised by life and battered by business, coarsened by experience and withered by adventure. Hers is the glamour of beauty that fades and the pathos of youth that flies.

It think it was Walter Pater who said that romance is the quality of strangeness in beauty. The beauty of Lily Elsie has this strangeness. I know a leather-hearted old cynic who haunts Daly's in order to feast on her troubling fascination. He tells me that she keeps him young. He confesses that he cries tears of joy over her. She revives his lost youth and all his forgotten illusions. She helps him to remember the brave days when he could fall recklessly and desperately in love. She enables him to escape from the harshness and

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hardness, the coldness and dullness of life. She turns the grey sky of his mind into a blue dream of tender devotion and yearning adoration. The rows on rows of people who sit rapturously watching Lily Elsie night after night are like my old cynic. They are all melting into this delightful mood. You can feel the stirring of romance in the amorous audience. It is rising like a tide in every heart, and blossoming like a rose in every cheek, and sparkling like a perfumed tornado. Its presence is felt by the most callous and most indifferent spectator. It overwhelms you like a drilled whisper or an organized sigh. You cannot resist it. You are forced to yield to its vague enchantment. The whole house is one vast Tupman dissolving in one vast desire, the desire to love and to be beloved, to kiss and to be kissed, to embrace and to be embraced, to adore and to be adored.

Lily Elsie is love in full blast, for her Sonia is a very amorous young lady who is wooing a very disdainful young man. As a rule, love in a theatre is the other way round. It is usually the amorous young man who woos the disdainful young lady. The change is welcome. It is pleasant to watch Joseph Coyne struggling against the undulating charms of Lily Elsie, for it is obvious that he is resisting the irresistible. No mortal man could hold out for ever against the lure of her eyes and

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the wiles of her smiles and the invitation of her lips. The angry coyness of Danilo is heroic. He is always trembling on the brink of a kiss, and always shying from the verge of a caress. His lips are perpetually a hair's-breadth from hers, but in the nick of time he tears his mouth away with an explosive "No!" Everybody in the house is a Tupman waiting for the kiss deferred that maketh the heart sick. Everybody in the house is a Tupman longing for the surrender of the persecuted man to the persecuting woman. The theatre is saturated with Tupmanity. Every heart throbs and thumps. There are all sorts of hearts throbbing and thumping behind all sorts of corsets and shirt-fronts, but they are all throbbing and thumping to the same tune, the old tune of love. Many of these hearts are superannuated warriors who are on the retired list. They are scarred and bemedalled veterans who have fought their last campaign. But they like to feel their old wounds opening. They are glad to feel the old ecstatic pain squirming feebly somewhere behind their whalebone and their starch. Then there are the conscript hearts of young girls, the blithe innocents that are only beginning to throb and thump to the oldest music in the world. Lily Elsie is the embodiment of their timid dreams. One day they will be like Sonia, desirable, desiring, and desired, languishing and languorous, coquettish and be-



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witching, slender and supple and graceful in a wistful swoon of sentiment and a dreamy waltz of romance.

This is the age of slim and slender nymphs. Lily Elsie is the last word in willowy gracility. There was a time when exuberance of flesh was the fashion, but to-day a woman must be a bending wisp, without obtrusive curves and emphatic contours. Venus is no longer voluptuous. She can hardly be too thin to please Paris. Her grace must be ethereal and her wiles must be spiritual. Lily Elsie is a perfect type of the current ideal. Her fragile body is the climax of that frail evanescence which is now the vogue. Her delicate face is like a poppy trembling on a slender stalk. When she swings in the waltz with Danilo's hand supporting her waist, you are afraid she will break in two. When she sways with his hand upholding the nape of her neck, you shudder lest her head should come off. She looks like a white rose whose petals would fall in a shower if they were rudely shaken. Her dream-like evanescence seems to float along the music like a lotus along an indolent stream. There is no violence or vehemence in her lazy charm. The slumbering passion in her lovely eyes is like the visionary passion of some impossible damozel bending over the gold bar of some impossible heaven. She is not a creature of solid flesh and blood, but a mythical fairy fashioned out

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of the stuff of dreams. She is womanhood melting into the mist of poetry and the vapour of romance. The long curves of her lips and her limbs recall the languid dream women of Rossetti and the swooning sylphs of Burne-Jones. The gliding undulations of her dancing lull the senses into a brooding reverie peopled with tender reminiscences and delicious recollections of all the fair women in song and story. She is a symbol of unearthly fascination and unworldly enchantment, an image of desire that hovers for ever over the abyss of fulfilment, of passion that is poised for ever on the precipice of disillusion. She is the mirage of unattained rapture and the miracle of unachieved delight sung by Keats :

Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,  
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve,  
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,  
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair !

That is the secret of the charm of the waltz that has run like wildfire through the world, and that is the secret of the ephemeral charm of Lily Elsie. She expresses the impossible love of all the impossible lovers, the hopeless quest of the human heart for a happiness that seems always within its grasp and is always out of reach. She is the laughing will-o'-the-wisp of life that Tracy Tupman follows till he loses it in the grave.

## FLEUR DESLYS

**T**HERE are many nuances of gaiety in this vale of tears, and one of the most delicate is the nuance you taste at the Alhambra. The Alhambra has a temperament of its own, and it is not in the least British, for it is free from solemnity and heavy deliberation. It has the wild grace of gaiety and the laughing spirit of fastidious extravagance. There is nothing so tragic as joy in its soul, for joy is a serious and sober thing which keeps a firm foothold on the surface of reality.

The Alhambra bans reality, and breathes fantasy from the very porch. When you step over its enchanted threshold you leave life behind you, and you forget that you are what you are. The Oriental lassitudes and languors of the corridors charm you out of your workaday mood, and as you sink back into your stall you sigh yourself into a mood of indolent benignity.

The Alhambra stall is a symbol of the place. It is half an easy chair and half a divan. Some day I mean to beg the Alhambra to give me one of these

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masterpieces of upholstery, for if I had one by my fire I should always find the secret of laziness at my elbow. It is really very hard to be lazy unless you have a lazy chair. The Alhambra stall is the laziest seat on earth.

Well, having adjusted your bones so that your body ceases to bore your luxurious mind, you light a long Ramon Allones, with all the fragrance of Havana in its tender brown slimness, and as the first puff curls and drifts languidly away, you feel the sea of deep content submerging you. That charming creature by your side seems to be more charming than ever. A few years ago men did not dare to take their womenfolk to the Alhambra. They sat alone in sultanic majesty, contemplating the witcheries of the ballet. We have changed all that. You may now take your wife or your sister, or even your mother or your grandmother.

There is a fascinating old lady two rows away from us, and it is pleasant to watch the glow of youth in her ancient eyes and to see the light shimmering in her silver hair. The art of being a merry grandmother is a modern discovery. People of all ages seem to be in the same mood of deep, indolent content, and this spirit of unanimity reacts on you, as you lie back absorbing the placid peace of the place.

But there is a quiver of expectancy in the heart

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of all this indolent satisfaction with things. We are all waiting for Number 9. Who is Number 9? Who but Mlle. Gaby Deslys? Not too soon or too late she comes, but precisely at the culmination of the feast, at twenty-five minutes to ten. The curtain goes up, and you feel the little thrill of suspense pulsing from the floor to the roof.

For a moment the scene is empty, then a miraculously dainty ecstasy flashes out of the wings, and it is filled to the brim with airy, bubbling, sparkling gaiety. She is like a glass alive with cool, winking champagne, which a thousand lips are sipping together. Yes, Deslys is champagne. She is the quintessence of the sun and the summer, and the warm light of Provençal vineyards is in her wonderful eyes. There are few eyes which possess the mysterious charm of hers. They are large, oval things, and their largeness is audaciously exaggerated by the art of the pencil. But their secret is not in their size, but in their clear vehemence of troubling naïveté.

They are the eyes of a child who knows nothing veiling the soul of a woman who knows everything. Their distracting appeal is a mixture of incompatibles and contradictions, the song of innocence melting into the song of experience, like the light of a lamp dying in the light of the dawn. Their bewildering glamour is a conflagration of childish

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wonder—ignorance in flames and innocence on fire—in a word, *Flagrant Deslys* !

This childish paradox is inconceivably fragile in every feature and every limb. She looks as if she would break into little pieces, like a Dresden shepherdess, if you let her fall.

Her mouth is as tremulously sensitive as the petals of a rose, and yet its blushing curves are as ripe as a September grape. When it laughs you see the lights of Paris, for Deslys is the triple extract of the Boulevards, and her smile has all the conscious grace of Cheret or Willette.

The illusion of infantile sweetness is intensified by her physical tininess. She is tiny from the tip of her nose to the tips of her fingers and the tips of her toes. Rather, she seems tiny, not because she is minute, but because she is fashioned so daintily that she seems to be a miniature. In reality she is rather tall, but she is as slim as a silver birch, and as evanescent. Her feet are irresistibly and impossibly tiny, and I am sure Paragot's phrase is the only phrase that is worthy of them—" *ces petits pieds si adorés*." Yes, we are all adoring the little feet that touch the boards so lightly. The whole theatre is breathless with adoration.

Deslys is an adorable *poupée*, and it is like a *poupée* that she laughs and dances and sings. She is "The Magic Toy," and "The Magic Toy" is

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a doll in an Easter egg, and such a doll! If only one could buy dolls like Deslys in the shops for one's little nieces! Everybody would want to buy a Deslys and keep her on the mantelpiece. Other actresses grow quickly out of the doll stage, but Deslys is still in it, and she has the true unreality of the doll in every limb.

Her eyes stare a delightfully inhuman stare, and her wooden grace is like expensive wax turning into flesh or flesh turning into expensive wax.

Her voice is the voice of a doll, a tinkling, tiny stream of clear music, without any passion or emotion—nothing but merry, unconscious life, and vivacious sprightliness.

But I have one fault to find with the delicious Deslys. Why does she sing an English song? Why is she throwing away her natural advantages? Is she to go the way of all Parisian singers who become Anglicised? She is an *article de Paris*. I implore her to keep her Parisian *gaminerie* and *diablerie* untarnished and uncoarsened by our London fogs.

At the Alhambra you always get a bizarre clash of sensations. It is a far cry from the flower-soft French fragility of Deslys to the Anglo-Saxon brutality of the prize-fight between Tommy Burns and Gunner Moir. It is like eating roast beef after the tongues of nightingales. The cinematograph seems to deepen the brutality of the

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ring. You have all the realism of the real thing without its atmosphere and environment. You are passive and dispassionate. In cold blood you watch these two pugilists with a shudder, for they appear to be fighting in cold, cold blood. It is like a silent battle between two ghosts. You miss the roar of the hoarse cheers, the shuffle of the feet, and the thud of the gloves on the warm, shining flesh. And the blood on Moir's face is black, not red. And the American is very sinister, very lithe, very slim, and very imperturbable. And the contrast between Burns and Moir and Deslys is so appalling that you leave the theatre with your heart bruised and battered as if Burns had been slugging at it.



## THE CATTLE SHOW

**T**WO - PENN'ORTH of velocity in the Twopenny Tube to the Bank. Then through a white-tiled pea-shooter to the mouth of the pipe that leads from the Bank to the Angel. Three-ha'porth of speed in the single-barrelled fowling-piece that fires cartridges of humanity into Islington. Then into a square box up into the grey paste which Cockneys call air.

As I wade through the grey paste I am wounded by the ugliness of everything. It is the ugliest maelstrom in London. The shops are down-hearted and down at heel. Cheapness gnashes its teeth at you from every window. The very buses have lost their swaggering joviality. The pavements are greasily despondent. A choir of gramophones is wheezing in a cave of harmony called "Funland." There is an allusion to the Cattle Show in the window of a sweet-shop which is decorated with fat sugar-pigs. There was a time when I could have eaten a sugar-pig with *Elia*n gusto. *Eheu, fugaces labuntur anni!*

Now the sidewalks grow bucolic. Apple-cheeked

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farmers with leathern leggings and strange dialects go by. The Agricultural Hall is a shock to the imagination. Paris would have graced this cathedral of cattle with bovine portals and heroic statues of yeomen. She would have carved horned heads of mighty bulls on its gigantic façade. London disdains such symbolism. There is not even a colossal butcher wielding a poleaxe to stir the fancy of the spectator.

As I go through the turnstiles I hear a gruff voice, and my hand is grasped by a broad-backed, broad-shouldered, broad-faced giant. With aching fingers I stare at the man.

“Don’t you know me?” he roared. “I’m the Angel. Come along and see my fatlings.”

I had never seen the Angel before, and I confess I was surprised at his appearance. I had imagined that the Angel at Islington was a public-house, and I said so with some heat. He bellowed out laughter that drowned the plunkety-plunk of the gas-engines.

“Me a pub!” he guffawed. “Bless your soul, I’m a farmer!” And with that he clapped me on the back with a hand as big as a barn-door. While my heart jangled like a pendulum in an earthquake, he strode ahead into a vast hall, filled with enormous oxen.

“Throw away your cigarette, my boy,” he

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grunted. "I can't let you poison my beauties with your filthy smoke. They are used to the honest air of the downs and the hills. Tobacco is good enough for you Londoners who don't know the flavour of a breeze. My beasts know better. Look at that chap! Bred and fed as not one of you whey-faced streetlings ever was!"

I blushed as I surveyed the massive masterpiece of breeding and feeding.

"Who is he?" I stammered.

"Who is he?" growled the Angel derisively. "You may well ask. Take off your hat, sir, to His Majesty. The best beast in the show, sir. Bred and fed by the King at the Royal Farms, Windsor. His royal sire was Royal Duke, his royal dam was Jenny Lind B, and his royal grandsire was Steadfast. There's breeding and feeding for you, young man!" Humbly I took off my hat, and bowed low to the august potentate.

"Sire," said I, "accept my loyal congratulations."

The son of Royal Duke gazed tolerantly at me out of a mild and magnificent eye. He was inured to homage and habituated to adulation. Silently I contemplated his immeasurable bulk. His back was as vast as Table Mountain, and his stupendous sides bulged outward like a Scotch boiler. He was a Himalaya of beef. No upholsterer ever stuffed

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a Chesterfield so tight with horsehair as this paragon has been stuffed with solid meat. A plasterer could not plaster another ounce on his bulging obesity. It seems to me impossible that this monarch can have eaten himself into such a glory of fat in two years eleven months and two weeks. I see visions of broad acres cropped close by those insatiable teeth. Is there any grass left in Windsor Park? He must have devoured pyramids of oil-cake and drunk oceans of mash. What chewings of cud he must have exulted in! What feats of digestion!

I fell to wondering whether His Majesty is conscious of his greatness. In his obscure babyhood did he conceive a noble resolution to masticate his way to the pinnacle of bovine fame? Did he foresee his future sublimity as he grazed? Had he moments of presaging exultation? Did he day by day view his growing girth mirrored in some limpid pond as he drank his draught at dawn or sundown? Was he ever haunted with doubts and fears? These are mysteries which baffle the curious mind.

But the Angel dragged me out of my reverie of adoration. He gravely presented me to steers and heifers of the noblest lineage, proud Devons and haughty Herefords, lolling Shorthorns and shaggy Galloways, dainty Kerrys and Dexters, Highland lads and lassies, fierce chieftains from the Welsh

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hills, crossbred dignitaries in scarlet and ermine, and red-polled cardinals.

“Thousands of Christmas dinners here!” chuckled the Angel. “They will all be roasted before they are much older. Come along and see the sheep!”

The sheep are very sheepish, and their wool is very woolly. They are absurdly clean. Their backs are impossibly flat. They look wisely at me with eyes framed in fluff. No carpet ever had a pile so profoundly deep and soft as these Leicesters and Cotswolds, Southdowns and Suffolks, Shropshires and Cheviots. Vainly I search for their buried bones: they are made of fat and wool. Their silver ears gleam like mother-o’-pearl. Their shelly horns curl extravagantly. It is sad to think that they will soon be mutton.

“And now for the pigs,” said the Angel. “Do you hear them singing?”

The pigs are the comedians of the Cattle Show. The oxen seldom low and the sheep do not often bleat, but the pigs grunt and squeak and squeal perpetual defiance at the crowd. I fear they are teased and tormented shamefully. Everybody pokes them with sticks and umbrellas. Their ears are pulled by the passer-by. The ladies giggle at their dilated snouts. A pig’s face is one of Nature’s wildest jests. There is no decorum or dignity in it.

One seraphic monster amused me vastly. He

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was a smiler. His mouth was slit preposterously far back, and his closed lips curved upward in a gorgeous grin that was half human. Is a pig's smile unconscious? Does he see the humour of himself? Or is it possible that he smiles at us? I suspect that he is tickled by the grotesque countenance of man. He despises its unporcine contours. I am sure that he regards himself as the type of beauty. He is proud of his wiggly tail and his shining bristles. After all, what right have we to impose upon him our convention of grace? Nature made both pigs and men. It is only an accident that enables the one to turn the other into rashers. I can conceive a world in which pigs should breakfast off human sausages. Let us be humble, my brothers.

"Well," said the Angel, as I shook hands with him, "I wish you a merry Christmas. Come again next year."

"I will," said I. "Do you think they will be fatter than ever?"

"They will, my lad, they will."

But I am sure they won't, for they can't.

## DINNER

**D**INNER is doomed ! The axe is laid at the root of the Mahogany Tree. The empire of the stomach is overthrown. I set the trumpet to my lips and blow. The night is broken westward. The cooks are cowering. The chefs are shuddering. The wine merchants are moaning. The florists are sore stricken. The fishmongers are afraid. The butchers are in despair. Dinner is doomed !

The downfall of dinner has not been heralded by the newspapers. The revolution has stolen upon us shod with wool. It has not been compassed by leagues and societies. It is the product of dim, silent forces. The gnomes of change have been working craftily in the digestive machinery of man. The vastest transformation in all the annals of humanity has been wrought into being like snow or dawn. To-day I salute the first faint shafts of the dinnerless day. I proclaim the triumph of the brain over the teeth, the victory of the soul over the palate.

Dinner is doomed ! It is dead of dulness and indigestion. Our rude Victorian forefathers would

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turn in their tombs if they were to hear the awful news. But we are a breed of iconoclasts. We are idol-breakers. We are in full revolt against the paunch of the past. Ehud is slaying Eglon. Eglon, as you know, "was a very fat man. Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer parlour, which he had for himself alone. And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly." Our Eglon is Dinner, and behold our lord is fallen down dead on the earth.

Lives there a man who will lay his hand on his stomach and deny this gospel? It is true that the corpse of King Eglon still encumbers the dining-rooms of Mayfair and Belgravia, of Bloomsbury and Bayswater, of Hampstead and Kensington. But the brute is moribund, the cadaver is cold. Customs survive long after their desuetude. We still wear two buttons at the back of our dress-coats. We still tolerate the tabs on our boots. Our restaurants still serve toothpicks. Quill pens may still be seen at Westminster, at the Law Courts, and other medieval haunts. In the same spirit of reverence for mouldy use and mossy wont we give and receive invitations to dinner parties. But do we eat the dinner? Do we drink the wines? No. We leave that to our menials. Dinners are no longer eaten in the



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dining-room. They are eaten in the housekeeper's room and the servants' hall.

The other evening I dined with Lucullus. The ancient ritual was solemnly maintained. The corpulent butler and the slim footmen ministered unto us as of old. Two by two we marched majestically out of the dimly magnificent drawing-room down to the dimly magnificent dining-room. Twenty-four of us, and not an appetite among us. We sat meek as martyrs before a procession of elaborately disguised negations, a banquet of cryptograms. Nature or the dentist had furnished our twenty-four mouths with ferocious ivories, but they were as idle as the molars of Triangle Camp. Mastication! Where have I heard that word? Teeth we have, but they chew not. Palates we possess, but they taste not. Throats we have, but they drink not.

Our plutocratic host led the van. He toyed with his silver and steel. The dishes filed past him inviolate. I avow that I mourned over their virginity. The humiliation of fish and flesh and fowl moved me to tears. The woe of the unquaffed wines made me sad. Sherry, hock, champagne, claret, port, and liqueurs wove their wanton wiles in vain. These whilom conquerors were vanquished by plebeian waters with alien patronymics and parvenu genealogies.

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Lazarus used to starve on the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Nowadays it is Dives who starves, and the crumbs in his crumb-tray would make even Gargantua replete. His heeltaps would distend Falstaff himself. As for Pantagruel, he lives in Poplar.

With the decease of dinner, the art of conversation has expired. The hungry dyspeptic inflated with Apollinaris or Perrier is a dolorous raconteur. It is well that Christopher North is bonedust. There are no Noctes Ambrosianæ now. Haggis went out with nightmares, rack punch, and the Caves of Harmony. The interlude after the ladies leave the dining-room is now a ghost of its former self. We no longer smoke cigars a foot long. A whiff of the cigarette, a chestnut or two, and then we stride into the drawing-room, break up the feminine session, politely bore each other, and are politely bored. Then a flat and jejune farewell, and so home, empty, to our hungry bed.

Dinner is dead. We are all teetotalers now, although we do not choose to have it known. The glass-blowers are bankrupt and the makers of decanters are extinct. The Tantalus no longer tantalises. Port has gone. Champagne has gone. Claret is going. Whisky is on its last legs. Can mighty ale survive? Can beer, glorious beer, stem the flowing tide of mineral waters? Can

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even that eloquent intemperance lecturer, Mr. Chesterton, dam the ocean of abstinence ?

What can take the place of dinner ? Tea ? Alas, tea too is *in articulo mortis*. Most of us are teatotalers. Shall we kill alcohol to make tannin king ? Coffee also is on the index expurgatorius. Chocolate and cocoa are for the digestive giant. We must eke out a tenuous life on Byron's diet, soda-water and biscuits, ameliorated by Igmandi and other radioactive beverages. Ere long the stomach of man will wither into annihilation. He will be merely a peripatetic brain, feeding on chemical emanations. He will breakfast on powders, lunch on tabloids, and dine on pilules. Knives and forks will be as obsolete as swords and daggers. The butler will share the fate of the seneschal, and culinary implements will be exhibited in the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's. A silver grill will be a curio, and saucepans will be as bizarre as warming-pans. Dilettanti will collect Edwardian cooking-ranges and soup-tureens. Finger-bowls will be regarded as quaint relics of the Twentieth Century.

Yes, dinner is doomed. "Good cheer" already is a phrase with a romantically archaic air, and Dickens looms like a greasy cannibal. Soon we shall shudder at the thought of munching a haunch of venison, a shoulder of lamb, or a leg of mutton. Rump steak, ribs of beef, and marrow-bones will

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conjure up visions of the mortuary. Imagination is starving us to death. Why prolong the farce? Let us give up the dinner-party as well as dinner, and die, if we cannot live, like men.

## A TRAGEDY IN PORRIDGE

**I** LOVE cranks. It is to me an ecstasy to discover a new Fad and a new Faddist. Cranks and Fads are to human nature what the hills and the clouds are to physical nature. They relieve its monotony. If men were all conventional the world would be as dull as ditchwater.

My friend Lentilius is the Perfect Crank, the Absolute Faddist. His soul is a disagreement, and his brain is a controversy. He is happy only when he is unhappy, and he is glad only when he is sad. His pastime is misery, and his pleasure is self-mortification. He lusts after unprofitable martyrdoms and sterile abnegations.

His chief dread is lest he should exhaust his capacity for quarrelling with life. "The good God," said Heine, "will forgive me. It is His business." The business of Lentilius is never to forgive anybody, and never to pardon anything. He eats the bread of intolerance and drinks the water of enmity. But his intolerance is beautiful and his enmity is gracious. His discontent is a

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game which helps him to endure the ironies of existence. If he were afflicted with contentment for a day he would die.

The other day he came to me with large tears in his frenetic eyes, and deep furrows of melancholy in his sorrowful countenance. I knew he had discovered a fresh grievance, and I congratulated him upon the splendour of his despondency.

"Lentilius," said I, "what dewy wrong have you unearthed in the desert of joy?"

He groaned a groan of agonized delight, and grasped my hand with a spasm of funereal bliss.

"My Palace of Famine is closed," he sobbed. "My Vegetarian Restaurant is shut up." Whereat he burst into tears.

It is terrible to see a strong man in the grip of tragic emotion. Lentilius had for many years found in his Vegetarian Restaurant a refuge from the gross pleasures of life. It was, I think, the first Palace of Famine which the high priests of starvation erected in London. Lentilius had devoted the best years of his life to its farinaceous ideals. On the altar of its marble-topped tables he had sacrificed his digestion. Within its gloomy walls for many a famished lustrum he had worshipped the Goddess of Dyspepsia. Everything he ate in what he called "The Vedge" disagreed with him, and he disagreed with everything he ate. Thrice daily he found in its doleful dishes the solace

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of complaint and the anodyne of querulousness. Now his staff of grief was broken and his prop of sorrow shattered.

"Sit down," said I, "and tell me all about it."

"It had been going down for years," he moaned. "They were too hard on the weaker brethren. They imagined that a Vegetarian would eat anything for the good of the Cause. It was a mistake. The spirit is willing, but sometimes the flesh is weak. Even the Vegetarian grows weary of well-doing and tired of Welsh Rarebit. They did not give us enough variety."

"Surely," said I, "variety is the soul of Vegetarianism?"

"It is," he sighed, "it is. They ought to have changed the names of the dishes. The name's the thing. Even if the same ingredients are used, it is a pity to call the dishes by the same name. I fear the brethren grew weary of the monotony. They fell away one by one. At last I only was left. But I stood by 'The Vedge' to the end."

"Could nothing have been done?" I asked. "A new nut-cake, for instance, or mutton made out of macaroni?"

"They tried to attract corpse-eaters by introducing fish-dinners. That was fatal. The old guard of Vegetarians fled. They saw the cloven hoof in the sole, and the thin end of the wedge in the whiting."

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"You mean the thin end of the 'Vedge,' surely?" said I, with feeble facetiousness. He stared at me gloomily.

"It was the end of everything. The brokers have been in for a week, and the food has been getting worse and worse. They tried to make us eat up the old stock. We did our best, but it was hard, very hard. Last night, while I was eating a very tough Welsh Rarebit, the Gas Company cut off the gas. To-day the shutters are up, and I am heart-broken."

"Cheer up!" said I. "There are other 'Vedges.'"

"They are not the same," he sobbed. "I hate their leaded panes, their white paint, their false gaiety, and their merry waitresses. There is no place left where I can get the mournful Porridge which was the joy of my life."

"Can't you live without Porridge?"

"Live without Porridge? Why insult me? Porridge is the only food which I can eat without gratifying my baser appetities. Porridge is the only food which I can eat without pleasure. Porridge is the only food which I can never digest without pain. Porridge is the food of the martyrs."

"Why not try Rice Pudding?" I ventured.

"Rice Pudding!" he shrieked. "Why, I like Rice Pudding. It agrees with me."



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"I am sorry for it," said I. "What about Bananas?"

A slow smile of meditative woe lighted up his haggard face.

"Ah!" he murmured. "There is something to be said for Bananas. I have always loathed Bananas. They are almost as beautifully repulsive as Porridge."

"And Tomatoes?" I suggested.

"Yes," he said. "Since I was a child I have detested Tomatoes. They are divinely nauseous. Henceforth I will live on Bananas and Tomatoes."

"It will be the 'Simple Life.'"

"Yes, it will be the 'Simple Life.' Only one thing worries me."

"What is that?" said I.

"I am afraid I may grow fond of Bananas and Tomatoes."

"In that case," said I, "you can change their names. You can call them Tomanas and Banatoes."

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF BEER

“**I** HATE to go home,” said my friend Falstaff, as we left the Empire. “The night has not cut its first tooth yet. Let us sup.”

“Supper !” said I scornfully. “I hate supper. It means listening to music you don’t want to hear, looking at people you don’t want to see, and paying for food you don’t want to eat. The man who has dined well cannot sup well. A good dinner does not need a supper and a bad dinner does not deserve one.”

“Degenerate weakling !” snorted Falstaff. “Supper is the coping-stone of dinner. A supperless stomach is a temple without a roof.”

“You are an over-eater, my friend. Hence your hogshead girth.”

“It is one of the great fallacies of our time,” said Falstaff solemnly, “to suppose that a man can eat too much. I can prove that it is physically impossible to eat more than enough. As my friend Blake says, ‘You never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough.’”

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“Well,” said I, “it would be inhuman to send you to bed on a fasting stomach. Take me somewhere cheap, where there is no band and no cheap snobs and no dear food. You shall feed and I shall watch you.”

Grasping my arm, he dragged me out of Leicester Square towards Piccadilly Circus. As we walked along Coventry Street, he took off his vast soft hat and swept the pavement with a magnificent gesture of salutation.

“Who is the lady?” said I.

“The Spirit of Joy,” he cried. “Don’t you see her? She is in the click and clatter of hoofs, the whirl of wheels, the flicker of winking electric advertisements, the flare of torches on the roofs of theatres, the glowing tip of a cigar, the bright eyes that are the lamps of the hansom, the cry of the newsboy, the muffled Mercury of the fountain.”

“Falstaff,” said I, “you grow lyrical.”

“Nay, I am a lyric. Know, my sober friend, that you are in Paris. This is the only spot in London that sparkles with Lutetian gaiety.”

Passing the Monico, he dived into the solitude of Glasshouse Street. Pointing to a lantern over a narrow door, he cried :

“À Berlin!”

“Berlin here,” said I, “and Paris round the corner? You are fantastic to-night.”

He pushed into a room, dim with smoke and

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crowded with men and women sitting at huddled tables. Falstaff seemed to know everybody, for as he led me through the maze he sent salutes in all directions. His path was paved with laughter. At last he flung himself into a seat, and throwing his sombrero on the table he seized a stone beer-mug and rapped a postman's knock with the metal lid. A waiter, whose face was slit with a wide grin, hurried up.

"Varlet," shouted Falstaff, as he smote the table with his clenched fist, "let there be beer!" And there was beer. For a moment his tongue ceased to wag, while he buried his nose in the pale amber flood. Then he banged the lid again, and cried, "Varlet, let there be more beer!" And there was more beer.

"Now," he said in a calmer voice, "let us sup." Seizing a huge sheet, covered with a bewildering catalogue of German delicacies, he began to descant upon the glories of Teutonic cookery.

"My son," said he, "the Germans alone know how to create an unquenchable thirst. Every dish emblazoned on this document is salt. What is salt for? It is for the stimulation of the divine drought that demands an ocean of beer. You eat in order to drink."

"Your palate," said I, "is perverted. I decline to eat and I decline to drink."

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“Abject! I despise you. But I will eat for you and drink for you.”

“And he did. I stared in stupefaction as he devoured Westphalian ham, Frankfort sausages, pig’s knuckles, and sauerkraut. I looked round me and I saw scores of jolly fat men, who were pickling their throats in the same heroic fashion. The very sight made me thirsty. Round the walls of this briny temple were horns innumerable—horns of the goat, the elk, the buffalo, the deer, the ram, the sheep. Little horns. Big horns.

The lid clicked musically on the stone lip, and Falstaff lay back at last in Gargantuan ease, his golden beard bedewed with golden beerdrops.

“When I was in Heidelberg,” he began dreamily, “there was a fair-haired girl, with forget-me-not-eyes, and . . .”

“And what?” said I.

“Ah,” said he, “and what?”

He gazed sternly at me, straightened his back, squared his broad shoulders, and pointed proudly to a faint scar on his left cheek.

“And that,” said he. “I drink to her rosy lips.” He dashed away a tear, and, stretching forth his hand to a tumbler, took a long crooked cigar, with a straw sticking out of the thin end. He lighted it, blew a mighty volume of smoke up to the ceiling, and, turning to me, put his huge paw on my shoulder.

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"My son," said he, with immense gravity, "the Germans are the only true philosophers. They see life through a sea of beer. Beer is the drink of philosophers."

"I have heard of Bass and Guinness."

"Bah!" said Falstaff. "They pall. Give me the brew that keeps oblivion at bay, that nourishes thirst while it quells it. The nation that can drink without being drunk is invincible. Germany is that nation."

"I perceive," said I sneeringly, "that you are a sot." A flush of anger mantled his clear brow.

"Creature," said he, "a sot is not a philosopher. I am a philosopher. I sit at the centre of life and watch it going round with the contentment of contempt. It amuses me. It tickles me. It arrides me. I tolerate everything—even you. Yes, my son, I find a reason for the meanest of the mean. Your chill sobriety pleases me. It is a bubble of contrast."

"Drink," said I, "is a curse."

"Shall we put out the sun because shallow-pates die of sunstroke? Fie upon you! Look at these good cits with their buxom wives. Would you begrudge them their little Paradise?"

"It is artificial."

"Is there any Paradise that is not artificial? My son, read Heine and Kant and Hegel and Haeckel and Nietzsche and Spencer and Shaw, and

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then tell me if all their wisdom is not folly. I drown them in a draught."

With that he emptied his stone tankard, and swallowed all the wise men of the West in a gulp. As the waiter collected his pile of papier-mâché discs, and reckoned up his bill, Falstaff smiled happily.

"Beer," said he, "is wisdom, and wisdom is beer."

When we emerged, Piccadilly Circus was dark and silent.

"See," said Falstaff, "Paris has fled. London is back again. The lights are out, and the strayed revellers are in Vine Street—Vine Street! You take the symbol?"

He doffed his gigantic hat, and once more swept the pavement with a gorgeous gesture of salutation.

"Who is the lady now?" said I.

He pointed to the stars that winked in the blue above the white curve of Regent Street.

"The Spirit of Joy!" he bellowed. "I salute the universe!"

But he went home in a Vanguard omnibus like a woolly lamb.

## TEA

**A**T any moment in London you can dive into a new world. Consider, for example, how many ways of drinking tea there are in London. I could write a book about them, beginning with afternoon tea at Buckingham Palace, and gradually working down to afternoon tea at Lockhart's.

Now and then I like to be tempted to drink tea at the Carlton. I dare not venture to go alone. There are some places where a man needs the protection of a petticoat, and this is one of them.

If I were to find myself solitary among those palms and waiters, I should feel like a thief in Scotland Yard. How could I sit at a lonely table and pretend to wait for an imaginary fair? It would be obtaining tea by false pretences.

Besides, I should present the sorry spectacle of a slighted Lothario, the dupe of a broken assignation.

In order to attain the mood of unruffled observation a man must be chaperoned. It is an absurd error of convention that provides chaperons for



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fearless young girls who do not need them and leaves unprotected the trembling men who do.

Man is a shy creature who takes refuge in clubs. If he were sure of an escort, he would come out of his shell.

This is the great secret of marriage. Most men get married in order to have a chaperon who can lead them safely through the pitfalls and snares of society.

But the chaperon has higher uses. She not only protects you, she also teaches you the art of social vision. The natural man is blind. He does not see the minute humours of life until a woman opens his eyes.

A woman can see everything without looking at anything. She can listen to a hundred different conversations while you are proposing to her. Her interest in you is never so passionate that it excludes her interest in other people. Therefore, even if you feel brave enough to storm the Carlton alone, I advise you to get yourself taken there by an experienced woman. She will show you more fun in ten minutes than you could see for yourself in ten years.

Be sure to engage a table in advance. She will never forgive you if you rashly expose her to pot-luck.

If you are acutely interested in her and she is acutely interested in you, I can recommend the

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secluded nook on the left at the top of the steps. It is nicely umbrageous. Avoid the tables on the right, for the band is cynical, and, moreover, there is a continual coming and going on that side. There are times when one does not yearn to see or to be seen by one's dearest friends.

But if she is wearing a new hat or a new frock (and she generally is), be sure to choose a table on the ground floor, not too near the wall. Women like to be conspicuous. It is well to humour them, and to mortify your masculine modesty.

If she is an actress, the choice of a table must depend partly upon her caprice and partly upon her genre. A picturesque actress fresh from a musical comedy will naturally desire the centre of the stage, which is the table at the top of the steps. Here she can see everybody and everybody can see her. I believe it is called the Gibson Girl Table. The orchestra is hard by. There are, of course, no footlights.

One afternoon I was pleased by the vivacity of a very charming girl for whom this table had been engaged by a glittering young man. She was an arch rogue. She looked prettier off the stage than on it, for the stage coarsens refined features and refines coarse features.

On her face she wore her natural white and red, or, rather, I should say, her natural ivory and pink. Her eyes seemed to be clear pools of innocence, and

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her eyelashes had a knack of accomplished bewiderment. I wonder how women learn these things? Do they practise demureness before a mirror?

The little lady had also a gift of sudden wistfulness. I know it was not connected with any inner mood, for she turned it on with the technical regularity of an electric sky-sign. She ate her muffin with dreamy passion, and she took a lump of sugar with melting melancholy.

Her hat was a perfect face-frame. It floated on the nape of her neck, a vast halo of straw and ostrich plumes. One of the plumes swept past the curve of her cheek over her shoulder.

It was pleasant to see all the other women staring at her. She seemed (I say seemed) to be quite unconscious of this, and she acted quite naturally. A woman who knows her business does not need to verify her effects. She breathes them.

One little detail would have escaped my attention if my chaperon had not noted it. She pointed out that the divinity's hands were dirty. She added that all actresses have dirty hands. (I indignantly denied this monstrous libel.)

"He has just told her . . . She is putting on her gloves."

I confess that this feat of deduction paralysed me. I remonstrated. I argued that no man (except,

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possibly, a husband) would say such a thing to a lady.

"Well," said my chaperon, "perhaps she thought of it herself."

I teased her by rejoining that she would not, in that case, have taken off her gloves at all.

"If she thought of it herself," retorted my chaperon, "it was not her hands she thought about. She remembered that the green in her gown made her arms look sallow." At that I gave in.

Just then a very tall lady came in, with a very short man in tow. She searched vainly for a table. Then she ascended the steps, surveyed the chattering crowd, hesitated, and finally vanished behind the orchestra, followed by her docile rearguard.

"They've given it up," said I.

"Not at all," said my chaperon. "She does not want to come back down the steps, so she is going round."

And so she was, for in a minute she appeared below, and skilfully unearthed two vacant chairs.

"She means to wait for a table," said my chaperon.

Presently a waiter capitulated, and brought a table for our tactician, planting it before her right in the crowded aisle.

"Why did she not go straight back down the steps?" said I.

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“Well, she’s middle-aged, and her husband is awkward, and she’s badly dressed,” said my chaperon. I ventured to praise her psychology. She smiled.

“You men *are* simple. Why, that’s nothing !”

She then began to tell me everything she had noticed. Many of the ladies were habitués. How did she know ? Because the waiters knew them. Had I not seen the band smiling at the little actress ? Then she asked me if I had seen Mr. So-and-So ? I had not. Why had she not told me ? She knew he did not wish to be seen, and that he thought he had not been seen, and if she had told me I would have looked, and he would have seen that he had been seen.

“Fancy !” she mused, “his wife is dead only six weeks.” Then she added irrelevantly, “I wonder how that woman got a Pom to match her gown ? I suppose she dyed him.”

“Good gracious !” I cried, “they don’t dye dogs.”

“Don’t they ?” said she, as she rose ; “in Paris they dye their husbands.”

“And what about their lovers ?”

“Oh, they match them !”

## DON COQUELIN

NATURE in a capricious mood said, "I will make a man who cannot possibly be an actor. I will make him ridiculous in face, mean in physique, ludicrous in voice. He will be the incarnation of the ordinary, the embodiment of the commonplace. Anything but an actor he may be—a Politician or a Poet, a General or a Judge, a Cardinal or a Cabman—anything but an actor." Having made him she set him free. Straightway he defied her, and became—Coquelin.

For Nature made one mistake. She forgot the great soul in the little body. "A little soul for a little bears up this corpse which is man," but a great soul bears up the corpse of Coquelin.

Look! The curtain rises on the first act of "Cyrano de Bergerac." The tiny stage is a world too small for the Hôtel de Bourgogne, for the stage within a stage, the play within a play. The *Précieuses* are stuck like chemists' bottle on a shelf, and a tall man could place one hand on the table of the Distributice and the other on the head of Montfleury. The marquises, cadets, pickpockets, citizens, pages and lackeys are glued together.

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All is chaos until a funny little man with a silly nose leaps on a chair, and in an instant the crowd is shaken into coherence like iron filings round a magnet. It is Coquelin. He is the most trivial figure on the stage, yet he immediately detaches himself from his neighbours.

Coquelin's *Cyrano* is a study of the spiritual grotesque. The master irony of life is the contrast between our spiritual and our physical nature, between our soul and our body. There is somewhere in our physical consciousness a dim passion which we call ourselves. It flickers behind innumerable veils. There are many names for these veils, but they can all be defined as the things that are not ourselves. These things lie round us in concentric layers, from the cloth of flesh to the cloth of stars. We are swaddled in blood and bones, clothes and constellations. Poetry is the cry of the soul smothered in its infinite shroud.

*Cyrano* is more than a comic lover with a comic nose. He is a symbol of man's spiritual rebellion against the physical grotesquery of life. His nose typifies the failure of life to live up to man. We are greater than ourselves. There is no dream that is not larger than its fulfilment.

Love is the finest dream of man, for love is the only dream that can never come wholly true. Great lovers are the lovers who have lost. Tennyson sang :

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'Tis better to have loved and lost,  
Than never to have loved at all.

But that is only the trite half of the truth. The whole truth is a far sublimer thing :

'Tis better to have loved and lost,  
Than ever to have loved and won.

For in love gain is loss and loss is gain. And the subtlety of love is this—the beginning of gain is the beginning of loss, and the beginning of loss is the beginning of gain. Dante loved Beatrice because she died before he won her, and Rossetti loved his wife better after he lost her. The explanation is that the body devours the dreams of the soul.

The splendour of Cyrano is the splendour of successful failure in love. His love for Roxane is the perfect gain of perfect loss. His spiritual despair is never sullied with physical hope, for his only hope is a perpetual despair. He knows that his body caricatures his soul. He is content to express this soul through the body of his friend, joyously divorcing himself from his own flesh, and loving Roxane in a disembodied ecstasy. He loves only his dream, and Roxane loves only hers. As their dreams are never broken by physical reality their love endures. They love by proxy.

The poetry of Cyrano, like all great poetry, is iridescent. Just as Hamlet is more to one imagination than he is to another, so Cyrano is more.



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He delights the prosaic mind that sees the play of light and colour on the surface. He also delights the poet who sees deep in the depths of the jewel an image of life. The genius of Coquelin shows itself in his presentment of the simple as well as the subtle in Cyrano. He can gasconade superbly. He can D'Artagnanize divinely. He can fling before you Dumas as well as Cervantes. But it is in the sad humour of Don Cyrano that he touches me most. I do not know anything more pathetic than his gentle acquiescence in life's absurdity, his serene acceptance of love's ridicule, unless it be his unconquerable contempt for death, his high scorn of compromise, his proud hatred of policy, his fearless fidelity of friendship, and his self-sufficient defiance of the world's derision.

Coquelin does more than interpret Cyrano. He recreates him. He makes out of his own ludicrous flesh the very gestures of the man, so that as the play unrolls we see him in a series of attitudes that are more vivid than the poet's imaginations. The real Cyrano could not have been so sublimely grotesque as this mimic shadow. As Rostand created Cyrano out of Don Quixote, so Coquelin, in his turn, creates Don Quixote out of Cyrano. The infinite tenderness of Cervantes is poured into his transmigrated soul, and we see in him the very quintessence of Spanish pride, that wistful grandeur of the spirit which transfigures humanity

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with the humour of clear pity and the irony of serene knowledge.

There is a rare quality in the comic genius of Coquelin which soars far above the common art of the actor. It is a kind of visible imagination. The imagination of the great poet expresses itself in verbal rhythms. The imagination of the great actor expresses itself in physical rhythms. He makes the body express the soul. Coquelin's physical poetry is infinitely rich. His dramatic humour is born before our eyes, and while we watch its birth we see its death. The eye and the ear are poor chroniclers. I can hardly see one of those gestures and postures that passed in a dazzling procession across the stage. The feet that stood so defiantly, the hand on the sword-hilt, the arrogantly poised head, the mocking bow, the vain simplicity of the flattered smile, the air of gorgeous *empanachement*, the yearning timbre of the voice, the glance that depicts a whole mood—where are these? Coquelin can paint the air with passions, but swiftly they fade, and eyes and ears forget. It is the tragedy of the actor. His work is undone in the doing.

The pathos of Coquelin is strangely mixed with the pathos of Cyrano during the balcony scene. Coquelin has been prompting Christian in the wooing of Roxane. But when he begins to impersonate Christian, the mimic prompter is

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prompted by the real prompter in the prompter's box. Coquelin breaks down. Real emotion invades his mimic emotion. He trembles more violently. His hands shake more passionately. His knees knock together. He stands in an agony within an agony. We share his double distress. We feel the double anguish of the baffled lover and the baffled actor. Hours seem to pass. We long to shout or stamp, and so break the tension. Then the loud whisper of the prompter is heard, and we see a long, unpremeditated reverberation of the prompting scene that Coquelin has just played. I wonder what is the precise state of Coquelin's mind during this ordeal. Is he Don Coquelin or Don Cyrano ? Or both ? Or neither ?

## SIR JOHN HARE

**S**IR JOHN HARE is still in the heyday of his first farewell and the bloom of his first good-bye. His threat of retirement is a promise of return. He must prolong his departure, and make the end of one career the beginning of another. Goldsmith said that Garrick acted only when he was off, but Hare acts only when he is on, and while he lives he can never be permanently off. He does not exist except in his characters, for he is what they are. Without him they never could have been, and without him they never can be again.

Hare is the Dickens of acting. What Dickens did with his words he has done with his own flesh. He has made his lean little body dance itself into our imagination and into our memory. He has clothed his meagre frailty with all kinds of queer humours and quaint foibles. You taste the flavour of Dickens in every Dickensian character, and you taste the flavour of Hare in every part he plays. The flavour of Hare is a rich blend of pathos and humour, brewed by squeezing tears out of smiles and smiles out of tears.

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When Hare was made nothing was wasted. He could not be thinner without becoming invisible. There is no padding in either his body or his soul. He is sharpened and whittled down almost to the verge of annihilation. It is his nature to be thin, just as it is the nature of Mr. Bouchier to be fat. You cannot think of a fat Hare or a thin Bouchier. They are contradictions in terms. Hare is spare because he is eaten up with nervous energy and restless eagerness. He is like a steam gimlet or an electric bradawl. There is a keen edge and a fine point on everything he says and everything he does. His voice is a razor and his glance a spear. His gestures are needles and his smiles are lances. The sharpness of his genius is almost painful, but it cuts you so clean that you do not feel the wound until you see the blood. His violent alertness alarms you, for it makes you feel that you are half awake, and that the other actors on the stage are half asleep. Everything he does is eager and quick and impatient. His briskness is almost morbid. He is as lively as a squib and as nimble as a shrimp. Ten or fifteen years ago in "Diplomacy" I saw him sniffing about his desk for traces of perfume. I can see him sniffing now, like an excitable fox terrier. I have forgotten everything else, but I can never forget his sniffs.

Hare is a master of lightning effects. He talks like lightning. He smiles like lightning in flashes

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that light up his face and leave it instantly. His elocution is a kind of forked lightning. The words leap and dart and zigzag out of his teeth. They appear to be released rather than uttered. If he did not keep them in order, they would fall over each other and trample on each other and crush each other to death. I could listen to Hare for ever out of pure delight in his staccato diction. The charm of his voice is hard to define. It is charming because it expresses his temperament. If you try, you will find that you can think of his voice as if it were a thing apart from himself. No doubt every actor, and, indeed, every human being, has a different voice from every other actor and every other human being. Just as there are no two leaves that are absolutely alike, so there are no two voices that are absolutely alike. But as a rule it is necessary to hear the voice in order to recognize it. Only a few voices have a separate existence. But when you think of Hare you think first and foremost of that crisp, irritable, nervous, peevish, querulous voice. It is like the voice of a man who is suffering from perpetual toothache or inveterate gout. Even when he is genial it is exasperated, and there is vinegar in its good humour. If you heard his voice in the dark you would mutter, "I know that voice."

Hare is a master of whimsical humour. By a grimace, a tone of the voice, and a flick of the

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fingers he can make you see into the soul of a character, laying bare its eccentricity, revealing with an airy twist its point of view and its frame of mind. His best parts are delicate caricatures and dainty grotesques. He can exaggerate life without making it inhuman, he can turn a crude sketch into a breathing portrait. His most famous part is Benjamin Goldfinch in "A Pair of Spectacles." Without Hare the character is a dull puppet, and the play is a lifeless machine. He has turned Benjamin Goldfinch into a figure as lovable as Mr. Pickwick, and as adorable as Uncle Toby. We love Mr. Pickwick and his spectacles because he is a divine fool. We adore Uncle Toby because he is an inspired simpleton. Benjamin Goldfinch is both a divine fool and an inspired simpleton. Hare shows us in him the charm of a man who has the heart of a child. He reveals the fascination of an unworldly credulity and the beauty of an indiscriminate benignity. His charity is insane, but it is delightful. His gentle folly is preposterous, but it is good for the soul. When I see Hare as Benjamin Goldfinch my heart softens, and I think tenderly of Oliver Goldsmith and Don Quixote, of Mr. Pickwick and Uncle Toby, and of all the wise fools in the world.

Humanity is a belief in human nature. Hare touches the very quick of humanity in this loving study of fatuous pity and blind compassion. He

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shows us a man who is happy only when he is deluded and miserable only when his delusions are taken away. We know he is deceived, but we love him because he is deceived, and we wish we could deceive ourselves. When he mimics the cynical worldliness of Gregory, we are spiritually hurt. It is as if we saw an angel taking a mud bath. But the actor makes us feel that the worldly mood is not real, and when the good man recovers his illusions and his spectacles we are glad. Hare helps us to forget the creaking apparatus of the play, and to see nothing but the goodness of being good and the kindness of being kind. It is the soft philosophy of Shakespeare and Cervantes, Sterne and Dickens. No other actor could have wrought this magical spell, for no other actor possesses the Hare touch that prevents the sentiment from melting into mawkishness, and the humour from declining into burlesque.

Hare acts with every part of his body, for he expresses character by gesture. His hands are his chief mannerisms. If he were to thrust his hand through a hole in the curtain and snap his fingers, the whole house would say, "I know that hand." Nobody can snap fingers like Hare. The whole man is in that electric snap, all his dry vitality and all his parched vivacity. Another mannerism is the long, lean, white minatory forefinger. There never was such an index. It seems to lengthen



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as it points. If it were to point long enough it would pierce the walls of the Garrick, pass the lions in Trafalgar Square, cross the Thames, and enter the House of Commons. The Speaker would say, "I know that finger." He would name it. Then there is the steely eye, like the eye of a ferret, that stabs in all directions like a rapier. If it were to look at you through a keyhole, you would say, "I know that eye."

Hare paints character as Dickens paints it. He makes men live on the stage, as they live in life, by means of their oddities and their eccentricities. He exaggerates us as Nature exaggerates us. Character acting is now almost obsolete. Natural acting is only underacting, which means being monotonous in every part. Life is various, and Sir John Hare imitates the variety of life.

## SIR CHARLES WYNDHAM

**S**IR CHARLES WYNDHAM was born at Liverpool on March 23rd, 1837, became stage-struck shortly afterwards, and in order to kill his craving for the theatre he became a doctor. He served as a surgeon with the Federal Army in the American Civil War. Tiring of the theatre of war, he tried his luck as an actor in New York with John Wilkes Booth, the actor, who subsequently assassinated President Lincoln. Having been dismissed for incompetency by the future murderer, he went back to the army in 1864. Next winter he joined Mrs. John Wood's company at the Olympic Theatre, New York. It is curious that one of those long speeches for the delivery of which in later years he became so famous brought about his downfall. It tormented and tortured the young actor, making his days miserable and his nights sleepless. He was playing a hero who was desperately in love with the heroine, and who apologized for his infatuation in an interminable utterance which commenced with the words, "I am drunk with love and enthusiasm." Paralysed by stage fright, he broke down. "I am

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drunk," he stammered, and there he stuck, while the audience tittered. Again the young actor was dismissed for incompetency, but, just as Disraeli avenged himself upon the House of Commons for laughing at his maiden speech, so Wyndham persevered in the teeth of his second failure.

He came back to England in 1865, and obtained an engagement at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, in "Her Ladyship's Guardian," Madge Robertson (now Mrs. Kendal) playing the heroine. His Irish brogue in "Arrah-na-Pogue" was declared to be bad enough to justify a Fenian rising. He toured with Miss Herbert in old English comedy, playing Charles Surface to Henry Irving's Joseph. He first appeared in London in 1866 as Sir Arthur Lascelles in "All That Glitters Is Not Gold." He made a hit as Hatchett in Burnand's burlesque of "Black-eyed Susan." At that time he was a wonderful dancer. Then he played in "Idalia" at the St. James's, Irving being the heavy villain, and a very charming heavy villain, it seems. His next success was as Captain Hawksley in "Still Waters Run Deep," with Ellen Terry as Mrs. Mildmay. In 1867 Irving joined the company, being followed by John L. Toole the year after. It must have been a company of angels, for, in addition to Irving, Wyndham, and Toole, it included John Clayton, Lionel Brough, and

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Henrietta Hodson (Mrs. Labouchere). In 1869 Wyndham played Charles Surface in New York, and toured in "Caste," with Louisa Moore as Esther and George Giddens as Sam Gerridge. In 1873 he was back at the St. James's, afterwards touring with the Bancrofts. But his first real triumph was won in 1874, at the old Court Theatre, in "Brighton," where he created the part of Bob Sackett. "Brighton" was the forerunner of that long procession of rollicking farces which made Charles Wyndham famous as the lightest of light comedians. It ran for a year at the Court, was transferred to the St. James's, and went to Berlin in 1875, where Wyndham played Bob Sackett in German. The Criterion Theatre had long been an unlucky house, but it brought luck to Wyndham. It had suddenly closed after a fiasco, but Wyndham undertook to open it in three days with "Brighton," and open it he did on Boxing Day, 1875, inaugurating then and there a succession of triumphs which lasted for more than twenty-three years. He made the Criterion a place of laughter. He took most of his plays from the Palais Royal, and they were all merry farces crammed with risky situations, and packed with audacious dialogue. "The Great Divorce Case," and "Hot Water," in 1876, paved the way for "Pink Dominoes" in 1877. But it was not the plays which made the reputation of the Criterion for

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fast and furious fun. It was the mercurial acting of Wyndham.

Wyndham had not knocked about the provinces for ten years in stock companies for nothing. He had perfected his comic manner. He had, it is true, roughened and hoarsened his fine voice by incessant rehearsing and perpetual playing, but what his voice lost in tone it had gained in flexibility. He could do anything with it. He had mastered the art of natural gesture. He had practised patiently before a mirror and before all sorts of audiences, aiming always at being natural. His scapegrace husbands and gay dogs may not have been morally edifying, but they were irresistibly entertaining. He redeemed vice from dullness and wickedness from monotony. His touch was as light as a feather, and he flew like a bird over the thinnest ice. His debonair gaiety was exquisitely irresponsible, and his daring wit was delicately nimble. He made his faithless spouses seem to be fascinating creatures from an artificial paradise, where morals were nothing and manners everything. Charles Lamb's defence of the Restoration dramatists might be applied to the old Criterion farce. Nobody took those laughing scapegraces seriously. They were merely vehicles for after-dinner laughter, excuses for postprandial merriment. Wyndham's light-hearted grace covered their wildest misdoings,

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and veiled their maddest improprieties. But after ten years of "Pink Dominoes" and "Betsy" and "Wild Oats," the actor sighed for higher themes, and in a happy moment he hit upon his greatest part in his greatest play, "David Garrick." He has played "David Garrick" thousands of times in England and America. It ran at the first go-off for over two years, and it has been revived over and over again. The public never wearies of it, and the actor never tires of it. Sir Charles has played it at Sandringham and at Windsor, in Berlin, in St. Petersburg, and in Moscow. "David Garrick" is to Wyndham what "Rip Van Winkle" was to Jefferson. When all Wyndham's other parts are forgotten, his David Garrick will be remembered.

The Garrick period was followed by the Jones period. Sir Charles Wyndham has produced a long series of comedies by Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, including "The Bauble Shop," "The Case of Rebellious Susan," "The Physician," and "The Liars." His success in modern comedy was as great as in Palais Royal farce, for he developed a delightful vein of humorous sentiment that gave body to the famous Wyndham charm. He revels in the unravelling of a hopelessly entangled situation which enables him to air his gift of worldly tenderness and philosophic cynicism and humorous wisdom. He is at his best when things are at their

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worst, and his powers of gentle persuasion have triumphed over the most insuperable obstacles and the most appalling difficulties. The propensity of young lovers for getting themselves into an "awful mess" provides him with opportunities for exercising his genius for soothing and smoothing and straightening out and coaxing and cajoling. You realize that anybody would do anything on earth to oblige that winning smile, those persuasive eyes, that poetic mass of iron-grey hair flung picturesquely across that broad, amiable brow, and those low, confidential syllables that rise and fall without a touch of monotony during a long exposition or a labyrinthine exposition. No matter what the play may be, whether it is "The Tyranny of Tears" or "The Mollusc," the Wyndham charm is always the same and always different. Everything goes down before it, players and playgoers, author and audience. The deep, husky voice, with its high, feminine, plaintive notes, vanquishes us all, and we are willing to be anything and do anything it pleases. The charm of Wyndham is like the charm of Gladstone. It convinces us even against our will. It is as easy to explain the charm of Wyndham as it is to explain the charm of Gladstone. That is to say, it is impossible. Like Father O'Flynn, Sir Charles Wyndham has a wonderful way with him, and there's an end on't.

## BEERBOHM TREE

**I** HOPE Mr. Tree will always provoke violent blame as well as vehement praise. It is only the man of genius who can goad the Philistine out of his indifference to art. Whether the Philistine fawns or fumes, the value of his voice is the same. Whether the artist draws from him execration or adulation, he is doing only what was done by Disraeli in the world of politics and by Whistler in the world of paint. The Philistine fails to understand Mr. Tree completely, just as he failed to understand the other artists completely, but he is fascinated by Mr. Tree much as he was fascinated by them. His admiration of Mr. Tree is tinged with terror. His eye, as he watches Mr. Tree, is full of respectful suspicion and distrustful admiration. The Philistine fears the caprice and the contempt of the artist, for every artist is born with a gift of wild caprice and a talent of ungovernable contempt.

Mr. Tree is one of the most absolute artists who ever lost themselves in Philistia or found themselves in Bohemia. He lives in a fine frenzy of



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impassioned contemplation. His vision is perpetually fixed on something faint and far and unearthly. Although our friendship has bred in us both an affectionate irreverence for each other, I can never talk to him without feeling as if I were intruding on a private conversation. He may not be a haunted man, but he always seems to me to go about with a retinue of importunate ghosts. I am sure they are always whispering to him when he is not whispering to them. Who are these ghosts? I think I know. They are the characters he has played, and the characters he intends to play. They are the emanations of his brain, the vapours of his personality, and I fancy he is often so bemused and bewildered by their silent voices that he does not know whether they are more real than he, or whether he is more real than they. He gives so much of his soul to his pet vampires that he must now and then feel himself fading away into a dim nothingness.

The effect of Mr. Tree upon me is nearly as dreadful as the effect of ghosts upon him. He makes me feel that I am not a real person. He switches me on and off, as if I were a human limelight. When he is drowning in his dreams, I gasp in a swoon of sympathetic negation until he comes to the surface again, and then, as we exchange greetings, I also come back to the self-credulity of self-consciousness. There is some-

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thing very bizarre in Mr. Tree's power of mental isolation. He is always marooning himself on some enchanted isle, and he is always being rescued by the practical mariners who cruise in the offing. I could not live more than a few hours in his company. I am sure in a day he would drain me of belief in my own past, and in a week he would convince me that I had no future. The explanation is simple. The world outside the theatre does not exist for Mr. Tree. As I am a part of that world, I do not exist for him, and if I were to let him have his way, I should not exist for myself. The world outside the theatre may sometimes disturb his sleep, but it never disturbs his dreams, for he is the most incorrigible dreamer who ever dreamed dreams with his eyes wide open. He acts in a dream, walks in a dream, talks in a dream, eats in a dream, drinks in a dream, and smokes in a dream. He is "The Dreamster." Once he got into a cab. "Where to, sir?" quoth the cabman. "Home!" he murmured, waving his hand vaguely towards the setting sun. He expected the cabman to know that His Majesty's Theatre is his home, and that his home is His Majesty's Theatre.

There are some actors who look out of place on the stage, and there are some actors who look out of place everywhere. Mr. Tree never looks out of place, for wherever he is he creates his own

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atmosphere. He makes the whole earth a background, and all the world a stage. I have seen him making a real funeral look like a stage funeral, and transforming a real cemetery into a set scene. It is only the great actor who can make the real life of men appear artificial. The more completely he creates illusion when he is on the stage, the more completely he destroys it when he is off the stage.

The wonderful art of Mr. Tree in creating Shylock is shown by the fact that his Jew reminds you of all the Jews you have ever known. His Shylock is more than one Jew, more than a generalization of the various types of Jew. He is every Jew in turn. He is mean in one mood and noble in another. Sometimes he is a monster of unclean avarice and foul greed, but in a moment he soars into Hebrew poetry and becomes a prophet and a seer. He seems to writhe out of one nuance of passion into another, as the actor shows you the dim soul squirming in the flesh like a serpent in a sack, now falling into the fiendishness of vile maleficence, now rising into the majesty of defiant martyrdom. Loathsome and leprous as his Shylock is, he never becomes inhuman, and his prophetic pride never degenerates into rhetorical sentiment. You abhor him, even while you pity him, for you see in his blind agony a representation of the blind agony that turns every human

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soul into a house of sorrow and a place of pain. Shylock is thus made universal. He is a man as well as a Jew.

It is in the trial scene that Mr. Tree's Shylock attains its height of imaginative splendour. The simplicity of the acting helps you to forget the crudities of the plot. You forget the bigotry of Shakespeare, and you see nothing but the tragic symbolism of the character, with all its chill craft, and all its cold cunning of malevolent ecstasy. The most appalling thing in the character is the cruel malignity of Shylock's hungry eyes. By some wizardry of make-up, Mr. Tree fashions out of his own eyes the eyes of a devil. They appear to be coloured a repulsively greenish grey, and one sickens as one watches their baleful glances. It is not easy to describe the horrible abomination of their malignity, but it sits in them like a slimy snake. It is not the make-up that fills the eyes with the light of an unspeakable evil. The actor puts the unspeakable evil into his eyes by compelling himself to feel as Shylock feels. He communicates to the spectator a sense of evil, which makes Shylock not merely credible or plausible, but which makes him real. No mere external mimicry could achieve this illusion. Mr. Tree is making his flesh feel what his soul feels. I am sure he is for the moment capable of any crime. I should not care to play Antonio to his Shylock.

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The fact that Mr. Tree "goes" for everything in the whole range of human emotions which Shakespeare calls Shylock, makes his triumph all the more tremendous. He compels us to tremble where other actors would compel us to laugh. He knows that when Shylock is not terrible he is grotesque, and he makes him a wonderful mixture of the terrible and the grotesque. He makes him grotesque without making him ridiculous. He makes him terrible without making him grandiloquent. His Shylock has dignity without pomp, sublimity without magnanimity. Irving's Shylock was inconceivably august and impossibly austere. Tree's Shylock is a Shylock of the Ghetto. You can smell him across the footlights. Yet his moral squalor is never vulgar, for the racial fury in him is always lifting him far above his mean mind. He is half a god and half a dog.

Another fine thing is Mr. Tree's caricature of the Jewish voice. It is not the voice of the actor you hear, but the husky servility of centuries, for the woes of the ages have made the voice of the Jew an echo of his anguish. There is for me something awful in this ancestral voice, which issues out of the throat of every Jew in the world, whatsoever language he may speak and howsoever earnestly he may strive to acquire the intonation of the Gentile. It always lashes me like a knout when I hear it, for it calls up all the moans of all

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the persecutions that defile across the wilderness of history. Just as you catch the murmur of the seven seas in the shell at your ear, so you can hear the sighs of all the tribes of Israel in every word uttered by every Jewish mouth. The tragedy of this cry lies in its unconsciousness. It will never be silenced until the last Jewish mother cries the last cry of travail.

The Jewish voice of Shylock is not more characteristic than the Jewish gait and the Jewish gestures. Mr. Tree not only talks like a Jew, but he also walks like one. He moves with that dreadfully furtive shuffle which the Jew has never forgotten since he hung his first harp on the first willow by the waters of the first Babylon. It is the shambling shuffle of the serf and the slave. It is the slithering motion of feet that have learned the horrible art of going delicately in dangerous paths. The bent back, the recoiling elbows, the deprecativ hands, the flabby suppleness of the beseeching knees—all the physical helotry of the Jew is found in this marvellous portrait. And behind it all is the deathless insolence, the indomitable hate, and the unconquerable vision, which have made the Jew in all ages a rebel, a poet, a painter, and an artist. Yes, Mr. Tree's Shylock has in him a spark of the artist who is, after all, the eternal outcast. He is an epitome of the rebel soul at war with things as they are.

## GEORGE ALEXANDER

**L**ONDON is no longer a metropolis. It is a cosmopolis. Foreign faces are seen everywhere. The Englishman has ceased to be the rule : he is almost the exception. The contrast between him and the other races of the earth is perpetually forced upon the observant eye. We see him more clearly now that his characteristics do not dominate the London scene. He used to be so inevitable that we took him for granted. He was the solid background against which we saw the American, the Frenchman, the German, the Italian, the Spaniard, the Russian, and the Japanese. Now he has ceased to be the background. We see him against a solid background of other races.

John Bull has been dead for many a long day, in spite of the efforts of the caricaturists to pretend that he is still alive. That pathetic old fellow is now a phantom. George Alexander has killed him. He has discarded the whole paraphernalia of top-boots and irascibility, rural simplicity, and short temper. He has created a new John Bull. Year after year he has perfected his portrait of

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the Englishman, until now it is a life-like presentment. If you desire to see what other nations conceive to be the typical Englishman, you must study George Alexander. The whole Englishman is there, immaculate body and immaculate soul, immaculate mind and immaculate clothes, immaculate taste and immaculate trousers, immaculate heart and immaculate waistcoat. The actor has crept inside the immaculate skin of the immaculate Englishman. He shows you his triumphant elimination of the vulgarities of life, his gift of universal uniformity. The ambition of the Englishman is to suppress every evidence of personality and every symptom of temperament. He toils to be like his fellows, and his fellows toil to be like each other. Where he fails to achieve this ideal Mr. Alexander succeeds. On the stage he displays in play after play the flawless Englishman who never deviates from the unwritten laws of conduct and deportment, of passion and emotion, of garb and grace. He is the apostle of good taste, the evangelist of good form, the arbiter of good breeding.

There is no blemish of rude humanity in him. He is exquisitely colourless and delicately drab. He crushes his own vitality in order to interpret the cold, hard, impassive propriety of the ordinary man you meet in the club and in the House of Commons, in the pavilion at Lord's and at Church Parade.



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He is not by nature a conventional man. His art is a victory over his own vivid personality. His magnificent head is violently carved and vehemently chiselled. It rebels against the smooth conformity of fashion. It is as rough and rude as a rock in its heavy angles and its massive strength. Its stack of grey hair is always in insurrection against effeminate compromise. His face is robustly square, with its granite brow and adamant jaw and iron mouth and its hammered virile surface. His body is ruggedly masculine, grim in its geometrical rigidity, almost uncouth in its harsh vigour. There is no suppleness or subservience in his limbs. His whole frame is a protest against trivial plasticity and petty compliance. But he knows that art is the enemy of Nature, and he mercilessly polishes his physical roughness. He tailors himself out of existence. He planes away his crags and cliffs into a decent commonplace of masculine propriety. He makes the actor trample on the man. After innumerable experiments he has evolved the average Englishman, the wonderful being who is only himself when he is like everybody else.

The Englishman has a passionate fear of being conspicuous or salient or odd or original. That is to say, he fears to be what the theatre demands him to be. Mr. Alexander is the only actor who has the courage to act up to what the Englishman lives up

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to. In every situation he is resolutely correct and obstinately well-bred. The consequence is that he appears to be impeccably natural in every part. He behaves as the perfect Englishman behaves. It is not easy to conceive the possibility of the perfect Englishman floundering in the frenzy of love. Good form is the antithesis of passion, for passion is essentially eccentric and wayward and violent and picturesque. Mr. Alexander shows that it is possible to make love like a gentleman. He puts love into its proper place, treating it as a subsidiary department in the business of propriety. The plain truth is that love is antagonistic to the English temperament, for love makes a man look ridiculous. The unknown jester who invented love took care to invest it with every sort of absurdity. The lover ought really to have a planet to himself, for he cannot expect other people to sympathize with his state. Love is not a passion that appeals to the spectator. It is purely an affair for the person concerned. At most it is bilateral, but the spectacle of two persons in love with each other is even more droll than the spectacle of one person in love with another. The healthy Englishman realizes the comic figure he cuts when he is in love, and he tones down the public aspect of his condition. Mr. Alexander does likewise. He tones love down.

There is a great gulf fixed between the love-

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making of Mr. Alexander and the love-making of Signor Grasso. The sight of an Italian actor or a French actor in love is apt to disgust the polite Englishman, if it does not send him into convulsions of laughter. Mr. Alexander knows that it is necessary to refine the whole thing and to make it proper and presentable. He is careful to make love dignified, even at the risk of making it tepid. He prefers to be cold rather than comic. It is delightful to watch him handling passion as if it were egg-shelled china. It is inspiring to see how delicately he walks through the débris of erotic rhetoric and amorous eloquence. One feels that he is giving all lovers a wholesome lesson in tactful moderation and courteous reserve. He demonstrates the possibility of robbing love of its fatuity and passion of its stupidity. He makes it clear that you can woo and win without sacrificing your self-possession. He proves that you can gain a lady's hand without losing your head. He tempts one to hope that civilization will soon complete the transformation of love out of an insane absurdity into an elegant and almost majestic commonplace.

But love is not the only passion which Mr. Alexander has improved out of existence. He reforms Nature all round. He has taught us how to be politely furious and tastefully indignant. He has shown us that it is a pleasant thing to be in a rage. He has revealed to us the nice side of anger.

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He has caught the modern gift of treating life with indulgent tolerance and bland amusement. His smile is the keynote of his method. It is a contracted smile, the twisted sidelong smile of the discreet man of the world who takes the tragic enormities of romance very lightly. His eyes match his smile, for they, too, are fond of narrow sidelong glances at the immaterial comedy of life. Too seldom does Mr. Alexander break out of life into literature, but he has always at all risks broken out whenever our dramatists gave him a chance. He has no prejudice against culture and no grudge against imagination. He is not afraid of poetry, and his fastidious temper often leads him to encourage men of genius. The better the play the better he plays, and, when he gets a character with red blood in it, he throws off his disguise and lets himself go. He revels in the violence of Bernstein and the vigour of Sutro. He is superb in the romantic sentiment of Anthony Hope. He has unearthed many fine plays, but his immortal achievement was the production of the greatest comedy written in English since the humour of Goldsmith and the wit of Sheridan went out. He it was who persuaded Oscar Wilde to write "The Importance of Being Earnest." Another artistic feat stands to his credit, the production of "Paolo and Francesca." The literary drama owes him so much already that I hope it will soon owe him more.

## LEWIS WALLER

**W**HETHER he swaggers in coat and trousers or swashbuckles in sword and cape, Lewis Waller is the curled darling of robustious romance. When I am tired of seeing life steadily and seeing it whole, I always turn to him, and he never fails to restore my sense of disproportion. When I grow utterly weary of the world as it is, he triumphantly shows me the world as it ought to be. He shovels the grey facts of existence into the gutter and puts into their places a glittering array of impossible dreams. He charges my soul with sentiment as Mr. Idris charges his siphons with soda-water. He cures me of the disease of common sense and he delivers me from the tyranny of reason. He drags me neck and crop out of the world I know into a world that nobody ever knew and that nobody will ever know. It is a world in which love is a tornado and manhood is a typhoon. There martyrdom is the chief business of life, and self-sacrifice is the ruling passion. There for ever roars and rages the unfathomable ocean of everlasting despair. There heroic hearts are regularly broken

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to sounds of slow music. There beauty is more beautiful and manly valour is more valiant, sobs and sighs are more sorrowful, tears are more tremendous, indignation is more indignant, scorn is more scornful, wrath is more wrathful, and gestures are more sublime. It is the realm of the romantic hero, and of that realm Lewis the Well-beloved is the uncrowned king.

No mortal man was ever so manly and so masculine as Lewis Waller. He revives one's faith in one's sex. He makes one feel that, in spite of the Suffragettes, there is something to be said for Man. In real life the manly man is rare. It would be well if our decaying and degenerate sex were to take lessons in virility at the feet of Mr. Waller. His virility terrifies our conquerors into adoration. When his voice thunders on the stage you can hear the heart of Woman thumping in the stalls in an ecstasy of fascinated fright. I am not naturally a timid being, but I confess that the spectacle of Mr. Waller tearing a passion to tatters makes me tremble in my boots. I know he is not angry with me, but I feel that it is not safe even to behold his anger or to be under the same roof as his fury. If he were to leap across the footlights, I am sure the whole audience would be plunged into a panic, so dreadful is the clang of his rhetoric. I maintain that his passions ought to be regulated by the County Council. But what safety curtain could

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defend inflammable girlhood against his fire ? All the water in all the hoses of the world could not extinguish his flames.

The worst of Mr. Waller is his capacity for breaking all the records in love. There never has been such a lover on this earth. After beholding his prowess the most accomplished amorist realizes that he is a bungling amateur. He makes you feel that it is a blasphemous impertinence for an ordinary mortal to fall in love. Even a millionaire with a lifetime of leisure on his hands can never hope to suffer as Mr. Waller suffers every night of the week, not to mention *matinées*. He has been suffering for as long as I can remember. Indeed, I believe he has been suffering for exactly a quarter of a century. Yet the quality of his suffering does not deteriorate. On the contrary, it seems to improve every year, and I have no doubt that Mr. Waller will go on suffering for another quarter of a century if the cruel and relentless fates should not deign to reprieve him. There is a certain grandeur in the noble joy and sublime alacrity with which Mr. Waller treads his path of pain. He does not grumble over his melancholy lot. He never rebels against his interminable misfortunes. He is always ready to be misunderstood and to be betrayed. He carries his trampled heart from one cruel heroine to another, and the more brutally it is trodden on, the better he is pleased. Over and

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over again romance has tried to break his heart, but it has consistently failed. I begin to fear that he has broken the heart of romance. He has exhausted its possibilities. It cannot provide him with any new form of anguish or any new variety of agony. He has worn out romance, and his eagle eye is sweeping the world in the hopeless quest of a new idea in martyrdom or a fresh notion in renunciation.

It is not easy to fit Mr. Waller with a part which he will not smash to pieces the moment he expands his lungs. It takes a Hotspur or a King Henry to hold him. He is at his best in the armour-plated rhetoric of the eve of Agincourt. The words explode in his mouth like shells. The martial resonance of his brazen eloquence sends electric shivers down your spine and makes your heart grow hot and your eyeballs bulge with patriotic pride and pugnacious fury. You long to go straight out into the street and slay somebody for the pure pleasure of living up to the emotions that he has roused. The explosive magnetism of the man is quite irresistible. It brings a lump into your throat and tears into your eyes. I am by profession a cynic, but I am not Waller-proof. He can make me weep bitterly even while I am jeering at him. He can make my heart sit on my head.

I like Mr. Waller best in costume, for he is as elegant as he is heroic. His manhood is polished,



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and he knows how to be graceful without being effeminate, to be a dandy without being a coxcomb. There is always a magnificent dignity in his grief and a careless majesty in his woe. The more deeply he is wronged, the more godlike he becomes. His attitudes look like romantic illustrations. Every posture is perfectly thought out and absolutely flawless in his outline. To see him in a play is to see every movement in the gymnastics of romance. Whether he stands in profile or with his fine features facing the limelight, every limb is in place and every eyelash is in order. All his gestures are finely filed and neatly fitted to the phrase and the situation. His superb eyes are admirably trained. They flash with the rhythmical regularity of a lighthouse. I think my favourite movement is the sidelong glance which comes into action as a rule in moments of intense passion and appalling danger. The whites of the eyes scintillate and coruscate. You can see their lightnings plunging deep into the heaving breast of the heroine or into the false heart of the villain.

Mr. Waller is an artist in scowls. He has been scowling for the greater part of his life. When he knits his brows you feel his strong and silent strength of character. I am sure the trade of romantic hero is good for the soul. I am convinced that the habit of being magnanimous and noble gradually affects his lineaments. I do not

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think Mr. Waller could possibly have been born with features so gloriously heroic as those he now wears. I have no doubt that every hero he plays increases the haughty grandeur of his countenance and the cold fury of his resolution. He gives me great pleasure when he moves his jaw to one side and looks diabolical. Then I know that he is becoming really dangerous. I am also fond of him when he fights a duel. I love him when he is desperately, but not mortally, wounded.\* I adore him when he is taking snuff. I cringe before him when he takes off his plumed hat with a gesture that brushes the flies off the horizon. I envy him when he displays his glorious calves clad in black silk stockings with golden clocks. I sigh over his inimitably romantic feet shod in black shoes with silver buckles. I am jealous when I behold him kneeling at the feet of a ravishingly lovely lady, making love to her in a voice that would melt the heart of a stone. But my envy is appeased and my jealousy is allayed by the solemn thought that Lewis the Well-beloved is a father. Nay, he is a father-in-law.

## FORBES-ROBERTSON

**F**ORBES-ROBERTSON is the most romantic actor of our time. By romance I do not mean wig and patch, sword and cape, velvet and bright iron. I mean the spirit of beauty, the soul of loveliness, the ghost of grace. There are many pseudo-romantic actors who can interpret the tawdry banalities of pseudo-romance. But Forbes-Robertson alone can interpret the deeper mysteries of the higher romance, the romance of the poets, the romance of the mystics, the romance of the dreamers. He alone has a face that is a mirror of the soul troubled with

the dreams the drowsy gods  
Breathe on the burnished mirror of the world  
And then smooth out with ivory hands and sigh.

His voice vibrates with the mysteries of spiritual knowledge and the secrets of imaginative experience. His eyes are filled with the light that never was on sea or land. His lonely nobility makes you think of mighty poets in their misery dead, of Shelley and Keats and Rossetti and Francis Thompson, for he is the incarnation of romantic poetry, the embodiment of gentle fantasy, the

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image of visionary mystery. In all other actors there is a taint of worldliness. Forbes-Robertson is not only unworldly, he is unearthly. He is a supernatural being, an angel masquerading as a man. If an angel were to impersonate an actor, he would look exactly like Forbes-Robertson in "The Passing of the Third Floor Back." He could not look more beatific, more benignant, more ineffable, more celestial. Indeed, I doubt whether any angel could possibly be so angelical. Some critics cavil at his automatic conversion of automatic sinners. I find it wholly convincing. Who could resist that beautiful smile, that ravishing voice, that enchanting gaze? It is possible that he failed to convert the critics, but I know he converted me. I left the St. James's Theatre feeling impossibly virtuous, inconceivably innocent, and incredibly good.

We have many handsome actors, but as a rule the handsome actor has no soul. The beauty of William Terriss was resonantly empty. The beauty of Forbes-Robertson is more than a physical endowment. All the variety of life moves behind the noble mask, and you are enraptured by its "strange irregular rhythm." It steals through you like odorous music, awakening dim echoes of vanquished aspirations and defeated aims, abashing everything in you that is mean and low and little. The temperament of the man permeates the tech-

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nique of the actor, saturating his look, his voice, his gestures and his whole corporeal presence with a vague charm that is the living poetry of the flesh, and forcing upon you a vision of human nature that transcends the ordinary aspect of mortality. The temper of our time is cynically hard and metallically material. We are born and bred to deny and to disbelieve, to doubt and to deride. We shiver in an atmosphere of chilly contempt for the nobleness of life. Coming out of that polar clime we are shocked by the serenity and simplicity and reverence of an actor whose sole ideal is the quest of gracious nobility and delicious beauty. That is why Forbes-Robertson is an anachronism. That is why his golden voice is a voice crying in the wilderness. That is why he roams through the provinces casting his pearls before playgoers who are not so viciously vulgarized as the playgoers of London.

I would rather see Forbes-Robertson in a bad play than another actor in a good one, for no part can destroy his high seriousness and his poetic glamour. I never weary of looking at his wonderful face, of basking in his wonderful smile, of listening to his wonderful voice. When he was a young man, Rossetti painted him as the youthful Dante, as Love speaking to Beatrice. To-day he is more Dantesque than ever. The years have not coarsened his ethereal lineaments. They have only

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enriched his rather effeminate sweetness with austerity and glorified his womanly tenderness with melancholy. There is no bitterness in the trenches Time has dug in his forehead and his cheeks. There is no malevolence in the shadows that have gathered round his eyes. His appealing spirituality has grown more masculine without losing its exquisite plasticity. Life has added a beseeching dignity to his solemn fascination and an imploring pathos to his plaintive charm. His eyes haunt you with a rarer passion, for they seem to suggest more and more subtly the cruelly baffling complexity of life. As a rule, one is not acutely conscious of an actor's eyes. They do not dominate the whole field of physical emotion. But the eyes of Forbes-Robertson follow your thought, emphasizing hints and shades of meaning too delicate for the voice and too intangible for the flesh. He acts with his eyes, letting the tide of his own imagination flow out of them in an irresistible rush of spiritual energy. This is rare even in real life, for men lack the candour and the simplicity which can prevent a film of reserve or hypocrisy from forming like a cataract over the windows of the soul. Sometimes you find this clear spiritual transparency in the eyes of a child, and in certain moods it afflicts you with a sense of loss and bereavement, as if you had caught a glimpse of what you might have been if life had not pillaged and

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plundered you. You find it also in the eyes of animals, notably in the eyes of a faithful dog. Rosseti bought a white bull because it had eyes like Janie Morris's. I would buy a crocodile if it had eyes like Forbes-Robertson's.

I cannot describe the voice of Forbes-Robertson. It is a voice that ought to be jealously reserved for splendid poetry and sublime prose. Its tremulous fastidiousness plays on words as the bow of a great violinist plays on the strings of a Stradivarius. Whatever it touches it turns into sweet music. It has echoing deeps in it like velvet darkness where the syllables move like soft plumes of sound. Its modulations are innumerable, and it can pick its way through every mood and emotion with unfaltering felicity. The gift of tenderness is very precious, for in order to speak tenderly it is necessary to pour sincere feeling into all the tones and cadences. Forbes-Robertson is miraculously sincere, and his voice is the utterance of his emotional sincerity. He can breathe a glow of reality into pinchbeck and a gleam of truth into paste. His impassioned whisper can transmute sham sentiment into the very cry of love. His voice is not detached from his soul. You can feel the shaping caress of his spirit on the dead words as they come alive on his lips. You can hear him creating beauty out of ugly phrases as a poet builds his lofty rhymes out of the débris of language. The miracle is wrought

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in your ears as you listen, without apparent effort or artifice. The lovely edifice of sound is raised like a dream, and before it melts away its site is covered by a new palace, whose towers and pinnacles are made of dying reverberations. The thing is sheer magic. It is the romance of the voice. As you listen you fall into a drowsy reverie, and you fade away from the play and the player into a visionary trance until you forget "the weariness, the fever, and the fret," the ugliness and the squalor of life. Afterwards you wonder whether it was "a vision or a waking dream," and mixed with your memory of the wonderful voice is your memory of the wonderful eyes and the wonderful smile.



## MARIE TEMPEST

**T**HERE are no dull moments in Marie Tempest, for she seems to have been made without melancholy. Born in London the day before yesterday, her maiden name was Etherington. She was educated in a Belgian convent school, where she may have picked up her perfect French accent but not her Parisian sparkle. In some respects her career resembles that of Lady Bancroft, for Marie Tempest is really a modern Marie Wilton. Macready saw Marie Wilton when, as a child of five, she played her first part. Lifting her on to his knee, he said, "I suppose you want to become a great actress?" "Yes, sir," said Marie. "And what part do you want to play?" "Juliet," said the child. Macready burst out laughing. "Then," said he, "you'll have to change those eyes of yours." Marie Tempest is like Marie Wilton, for she can never change those eyes of hers. Her eyes are her life and soul. When you think of Marie Tempest you think of the incomparable eyes in which all the imps of humour and all the gnomes of mischief are always dancing.

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The Americans call her "Dresden China," and George Meredith would call her "a dainty rogue in porcelain." She is a Puck in petticoats, and an Ariel in stockings. She has the heart of a tomboy with the brain of a coquette. She is all impulse and impudence, lightness and levity, insouciance and elegance, frolic and fun. She can be gracefully gauche and wittily vulgar. She is a bundle of fascinating contradictions and charming incongruities. Her maddest whims are never coarse, and her wildest pranks never degenerate into tomfoolery, for she is an artist to the tip of the adorable little tip-tilted nose which is always turning itself up at everything in this solemn old humbug of a world.

But let me try to describe what the Irish would call the "divilment" in her eyes. There is no other word for it. They are full of pure "divilment" even in the mock repose of gravity, when she is holding back the lightnings of laughter that are ready to flash in all directions. Her bottled fun is always bursting to break loose. You can see the drollery struggling behind her half-shut eyelids. You wait breathlessly for something to give and to go. As you watch her, you anticipate the explosion of humour before it explodes somewhere in the world of comedy behind her eyes. You see it coming long before it comes. A little ripple of fun wavers over her eyes like a flicker of

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light on still water. Then the ripple breaks into waves and the waves break into a surging foam of merriment. The eyebrows go up and up and up, and the eyelids crinkle and twist and crumple into a thousand twinkling twinkles, till the summer storm of humour turns into a summer tempest of roguishness. Marie Tempest's eyes are merrily droll. You cannot resist their irresistible onslaught. Their charging laughter takes you off your feet and whirls you into a delirious stampede of joyous emotions and capering moods and irresponsible frivolities and gay audacities.

Her mouth collaborates with her eyes. It is the very mouth of comedy. It is an instrument on which she plays the whole scale of mockery with subtle variations. Most mimes have a stock smile which they turn on and off like gas. Marie Tempest has many smiles, from the strangled smile that plays peekaboo in the corners of her lips to the jolly smile that broadens from ear to ear. Her pet smile ties her mouth in a knot, as if her lips were trying to screw themselves up as tight as her eyes. Her smile contracts and expands, passing through tones and shades of humour which correspond with their moods.

Her humour runs lightly and swiftly along her lips, as the fingers of a pianist run along the keyboard of a piano. She is an artist in smiles, for her grins and grimaces are spontaneous and her volley-

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ing laughter rings true. This is the secret of her freshness, for she bathes her acting in personality. Her own radiant temperament breaks through all the theatrical barriers. You do not think of her as an actress, for she is like a schoolgirl playing a boisterous game and not a part.

She has the eyes of comedy and the mouth of comedy. She has also the voice of comedy. Her diction is vividly clear and quick. Nobody can talk more rapidly than Marie Tempest. The words trip over each other on her tongue. In this she resembles the French, but I would back her against even them. Her volubility is bewildering. It leaves you, but not her, breathless. The velocity of her talk is due to the velocity of her brain. She thinks faster than the play. She hustles the words and the gestures until all the other players seem half asleep. She is exuberantly alive. She has a picturesque knack of vocal caricature. She croaks and grunts, and squeaks and squeals, and shrieks and screams and squawks in a hundred different ways. There are hordes of little devils in her voice, all trying various tunes of cackling derision and chuckling mockery. Sometimes she is Granier and Coquelin rolled into one. The breadth of her comedy is almost masculine. Her gestures are her own, for her quick personality dances in every limb. Her very fingers talk, and she can carry off a mood with a flourish of her arms or a

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toss of her head or a shrug of her shoulders or a wriggle of her hips. There is always human emotion in her comedy. She keeps derisively in touch with life. When she is most grotesque there is in her fun a faint appeal for sympathy. Her humour is imperceptibly flavoured with pathos, and her drollery has in it a spoonful of cracked sentiment.

Marie Tempest is the last cry in the comedy of feminine artifice. Eve would stare and gasp at her frocks. What she does not know about hats and frocks is not knowledge. It is very easy to buy clothes, but it is not very easy to put them on. English actresses can clothe themselves, but very few of them can dress. The art of dressing usually comes late in life. The older a woman grows the better she dresses. This is a tragedy, for it is hard to live down a dowdy youth. Marie Tempest is ineffably artificial and divinely meretricious, from the jaunty hat on her saucy head to the red-gold wavelets of her hair; from the naughty ruff round her naughty ears to the tempestuous hang of her tempestuous skirt. She belongs to her clothes, whereas your clothes, dear lady, barely belong to you. It is not enough to own your hat: your hat must own you. A hat does not begin to be a hat until it becomes a part of you and you become a part of it. Otherwise it is merely a heap of things hung on your head. Marie Tempest adds a new

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terror to simplicity. She makes every woman in the theatre feel a frump. Her polished brightness is inhuman, for she has improved Nature out of existence. Her brilliant sureness kills your last lingering belief in the physical superiority of man. No man was ever turned out like that. No man ever harnessed his soul to his body so accurately, for she is an absolute amalgamation of the body and the soul, a miraculous union of all the senses, everything in working order, from the first hair to the last eyelash, a continual, effervescing triumph of calculated harmony and sharp design and flawless symmetry.

But this is not all. There is dancing life in the depths of the diamond. And what life! The wayward force of it plays on the play and the players and the spectators in a sparkling stream of personality. The darting brilliance of it blinds you and dazzles you. You forget the wheezing mechanism of the plot. You forget the puppetry of the puppets. You forget the pinchbeck glitter of the wit. You forget that the thing before you is a wooden doll, for Marie Tempest can make a marionette come alive when she gets inside it. She can turn farce into comedy, horseplay into laughter, and sawdust into blood.

## MARTIN HARVEY

**M**ARTIN HARVEY knows that "nothing is so dainty sweet as melancholy." He has established a monopoly in misery and a corner in sorrow. It is a mistake to imagine that gloom is unpopular, and that pathos is unprofitable. Sadness is a great theatrical asset. There is something in human nature that is gratified by a powerful display of grief. The pleasure caused by tears is quite as real as the pleasure caused by laughter. I have no doubt that Martin Harvey and Harry Lauder work on the same nerve, and fiddle on the same string. The one makes you feel funnily uncomfortable, and the other makes you feel uncomfortably funny. It is probable that sorrow is simply joy walking backwards. We all know people who are happy only when they are unhappy. They have crape souls. They are the sots of sorrow. But the healthy man desires misery only in his hours of ease. He is melancholy only in his amusement. He goes to the theatre in order to escape from the monotonous gaiety of life.

There is a good deal of real trouble in the world,

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but there is also a good deal of real happiness. It is a pity that there is not enough real trouble to go round. Many of us are fobbed off with artificial tribulation. Our days caper cheerfully along without any first-class anguish. Our digestions are prosaically good. We have enough money to pay our butcher and our barber. As we cannot manufacture moral spasms, spiritual aches, and sentimental pains, we are compelled to buy them. We are so hopelessly contented that we are forced to hire a little discontent to relieve the cheerful sameness of our cosy existence. As most playgoers belong to the sorrowless classes, it is easy to understand why Martin Harvey is popular. He is a purveyor of woe for the woeless, of tears for the tearless, of sighs for the sighless, of moans for the moanless. He flushes tear-passages which would otherwise be blocked with dry bliss. How many happy persons owe to him the rapture of second-hand desolation. He has saved multitudes from the doom of dying without having shed a tear. He helps us to forget the carking carelessness we leave behind us at home. He saddens our joy-worn faces and smoothes away our smiles. He relieves our minds from the pressure of pleasure. He takes us into a world where happiness is not compulsory and where misery is not an idle dream. If we have not enough imagination to be melancholy, he can saturate us with it. He is a mill of misery, filled



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with roaring looms of lamentation. It is good that we can fly to him from a world devastated by bliss. If you wish to escape for a whole evening from all the joys that flesh is heir to, I advise you to go and see Martin Harvey.

I dote on Martin Harvey. He is an artist in romantic melancholy. He learned all the tricks of the trade during the thirteen years which he spent with Irving. But the melancholy of Irving was barbed with irony. It was an intellectual melancholy. The melancholy of Martin Harvey is emotional. He is a handsome tear. When an ugly man is melancholy he is ridiculous. Martin Harvey is not an ugly man. He is beautiful with a Byronic beauty. His sable locks and his sable eyes match his sable voice. It is curious that all sorrowful souls are sombre. You cannot conceive the possibility of a sorrowful blonde. It is necessary to be black in order to be blue. The blackness of Martin Harvey is more than characteristic; it is a property. Fair hair and blue eyes would ruin him. Black hair is sometimes cheerful. Now and then it is comic. Dan Leno's hair was black. But there is blackness and blackness. There is the blackness of a well-varnished boot, and there is the blackness of a hearse. There is the blackness of a top-hat, and there is the blackness of a coffin. But the blackness of Martin Harvey is different from all these. It is the blackness of romantic

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dejection and poetic despair. It is the blackness of art.

I do not wish to exaggerate the importance of Martin Harvey's hair. I do not desire to say that its blackness is to him what blacking is to Day and Martin. I do not suggest that he is like Samson, whose strength was in his hair. But I am as sure that he could not act without his hair as I am sure that his hair could not act without him. The hair is the man. The state of his hair betrays the state of his soul, just as the barometer betrays the state of the weather. His hair is very sensitive, for it feels every breath of the stormy emotions that blow across his brow. It always rises to the occasion, and it expresses every shade of grief and terror, rage and despair, wrath and rhapsody. It is capable of everything that it within the compass of hair. It can do anything that hair can do. Nothing could be more disorderly than its disorder. Nothing could be more riotous than its riot. It outrages the finest instincts of the hair-dresser. It laughs at the brush and gibbers at the comb. It is the last word in the unkempt.

But the hair of Martin Harvey is not his only virtue. His eyes are even more soulful. It is his soul that blackens his hair, and it is his soul that blackens his eyes. The ebony sorrow of his soul brims over in his eyes. They are Cimmerian pools of gloom. They are the dark deltas of an inky

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Amazon of grief. When you see these raven orbs gazing into the depths of eternity, you know that all is for the worst in the worst of all possible worlds. You are soothed by the thought that the reservoirs of misery are inexhaustible and that the pipe lines of woe are infinite. You feel that you can face once more the levity of life and the frivolity of work, for the memory of the unfathomable melancholy in those lustrous moons will assuage your mirth and alleviate your gladness.

The mortuary grace of Martin Harvey is based on whiteness as well as blackness. His black hair and his black eyes are the antithesis of his white face. He is all black and white, like a mourning envelope. I do not know why a white face with a border of black hair should be mournful and why a black face with a border of white hair should be comical. I do not know why a red face should be ridiculous and why a white face should be romantic. They are conventions due to the fact that we have been taught to regard niggers and drunkards as drolleries. If the civilized majority of men had black faces, then men with white faces would be grotesque. Mr. Kipling would not talk about "The White Man's Burden." He would talk about "The Black Man's Burden." It is all an accident of colour, a freak of Nature's paint-pot. If we were all born with red faces and alcohol turned our noses white, then we should laugh at a

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man with a white nose. If sorrow painted our cheeks purple instead of making them pale, then purple faces would be poetic, and Martin Harvey would be a lion comique. But a corpse-like pallor is romantic, and Sydney Carton is the only serious rival of the Corsican Brothers. Even the snow is romantic. The duel in the snow would be spoiled if Nature had not decided to make snow white instead of black. After all, there is no earthly reason why snow should be white. Nature could have made black snow if she had chosen. She might have given us white coal and black snow. But Nature thought of Christmas and Martin Harvey, for Nature is a melodramatist. She knew that white snow would go well with Martin Harvey's white face and white shirt, making a romantic background for his black hair and his black eyes, to say nothing of his black voice, with its dark, funereal rhythm, his black smile with its sorrowful undulations, and his sombre soul with its bottomless sea of inky agony.

## ALBERT CHEVALIER

**A**LBERT ONÉSIME BRITANNICUS GWATHVEOED LOUIS CHEVALIER—that is the real name of Albert Chevalier. It is a magnificent name. It is even more magnificent than the great rolling name of Paragot—Berzélius Nibbidard Polydore Pradel Paragot. It suggests the polychromatic genius of the many-coloured coster mime who has French and Italian and Welsh blood in his veins. Albert Chevalier was born in 1862 in Notting Hill. His father was a French master in the Kensington Grammar School. He began his theatrical adventures as a boy of eight when he recited a poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes in the Cornwall Hall, Notting Hill. Henry Compton, smoking a long clay pipe, heard the boy reciting in his house in Kensington Square, patted him on the back, and said, “Very good! Come and see me again when your voice breaks!” His voice broke in due time, and he has been making us laugh and cry with that broken voice for nearly twenty years. His long drill and discipline would have broken many a smaller

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man's heart as well as his voice, for he learned his art in the old, hard school that produced Sir Charles Wyndham and Sir John Hare, and many another great actor. His voice to-day is as richly broken as Wyndham's. You can hear thirty years of touring in it. It is the true, rich fruity actor's voice.

He has played—where has he not played? To begin with, he played in the old Prince of Wales's Theatre, the "Dusthole," with the Bancrofts, the Kendals and John Clayton. There he and Fred Storey were boys together. In those early days he was "Mr. Knight" on the playbills—Knight being the English equivalent of Chevalier. Later he reverted to his own name, and he won his histrionic spurs as Albert Chevalier. From 1878 to 1887 he played in town and country with the Kendals, with Hare, with George Alexander, with Willie Edouin, and with Toole. He played all sorts of parts, from Mazette in "Don Giovanni" to the Frenchman in "The Magistrate." He played in Robertson comedy, in Pinero farce, in burlesque, in grand opera and in comic opera. It was in the burlesque of "Aladdin" at the Strand that he sang his first coster song, "The 'Armonic Club." At the Avenue he took the place of Arthur Roberts for two years. It seemed that he would always be an actor of the good old type, ready to play any part that turned up. Luckily for him and for us

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he found himself "out of a shop," and by a happy accident tried his coster songs on a famous night in 1891 at the Pavilion. He was afraid that his delicate art would not please the fidgety music-hall audience, but the Pavilion leapt at it, and after singing "The Coster's Serenade" he was overwhelmed with rapturous applause. That song is now a Cockney classic.

Classics also are many of the great songs of Chevalier, such as "The Future Mrs. 'Awkins," "Wot cher!" "The Coster's Courtship," "The Nipper," "My Old Dutch," "Wot's the Good of Hanyfink? Why, Nuffink," "Tick Tock," "The Fallen Star," and "Wot Fur Do Ee Luv Oi?" They are part of the permanent folk-songs of the language. They come straight from the homely joys and sorrows of the people; for Chevalier has quarried them out of the hearts of the London poor, shaped the words with beautifully naïve and simple art, and married pathetic and plaintive Cockney music to the words. Sometimes the tune is his own; sometimes it is by his brother and manager, Auguste (known as "Charles Ingle"); sometimes it is by John Crook, and sometimes it is by some other composer. But the real maker of both the words and the tune is Chevalier, the artist who can make London cry and laugh over her own tears and laughter.

Chevalier is an artist, for he is a poet as well as a

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comedian, a humorist as well as a mime. In the delicacy of his sentiment and his humour you can see the French and Italian and Celtic strain. But there is an English breadth in his comic force. The mixture of qualities makes him an artist who can show you the depths as well as the surface of human nature. There has never been a music-hall singer so refined and at the same time so realistic. He is the Hogarth of the music-halls, but he is free from the bitter Hogarthian brutality. He loves his characters, and that is why they are so miraculously alive. One night, while he was singing "My Old Dutch" in an East End hall, an old fellow flung his arms round his old wife's neck and gave her a kiss that was heard over the whole house. The homely pathos of the song is heartbreaking. Indeed, there is in Chevalier's simple coster songs something that recalls the lyric cry of Burns. You feel the ache and pain of the human heart in them. You cannot harden yourself against their dramatic magic. They carry your soul by storm, and before you have had time to think you are in tears. The tears that Chevalier makes you shed are not maudlin tears. They are tears that make your soul wiser and nobler, and purer and tenderer, for they are the product of honest, direct, and unsophisticated emotion. This magician makes you see the eternal simplicity of human nature, the brave goodness of common lives, and the queer



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lovableness of humble love. There is no mean malice in his mimicry and his caricature, for all he does is steeped in pity and sympathy and compassion.

The dramatic humour of Chevalier is a very wonderful thing. He makes you see the very soul of the type he represents, and not merely the external physical mannerisms. His imitators can imitate his physical mannerisms and parody his technical brilliancy, but they cannot steal his spiritual magic. Gus Elen and Alec Hurley are only the husks of his genius. The dramatic humour of Chevalier is a mystery, for it comes from the man behind the actor. It is an imaginative force that breaks through conventions. I saw Chevalier the other day in a very conventional part, that of an old French actor in a dramatic sketch called "Behind the Scenes." But he made me laugh and cry over the pathetic human simplicity of the character. He created Achille Talma Dufard in the magical way that Dickens created Micawber and Dick Swiveller and Mr. Pickwick. And indeed there is a rich Dickensian quality in Chevalier's art, a strange touching power of making eccentricity and extravagance appear more tearfully and more laughably human than humanity. What is this power? It is the glamour of emotional sincerity, the magic of feeling the human soul so honestly that others also feel it

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honestly. Dickens made us love his fantastic caricatures because he made us wince at their simple human reality. Chevalier makes us wince in the same way. Below his facial drollery, his comic gestures, and his vocal mockery there is the living movement of the living soul that is your soul and my soul and everybody's soul. We are what he sings and what he says, and as we are transfigured into the common life of common humanity we find ourselves melting into a passionate sympathy of human smiles and human tears. That is dramatic genius, for it makes us alive with the life of our queer human brotherhood, freeing us from our sense of personal isolation, merging our cold egoism in the warm flood of human nature. Dickens does that and Burns does it, and Chevalier does it, and we feel better for their doing of it. An hour with Chevalier is a release of the soul, an expansion of the spirits, an enlarging of the good, broad, human humour that is the very breath in our lungs, and the very blood in our hearts. Dickens is dead, but the characters of Dickens are alive, and will always be alive. It is otherwise with the Cockney masterpieces of Chevalier. They will die with him, for, although his songs will survive him, without his voice they are only the shadows of themselves. They shrink when other singers sing them into ghosts and phantoms, for they lack the final touch of artistry that makes

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poetry everlasting. Yet their sobbing humour is a very durable thing, and it will endure long after the coster and the Cockney have been slain by the schoolmaster and the newspaper.

## SEYMOUR HICKS

**M**R. SEYMOUR HICKS is more than versatile ; he is universal. His universality frightens me. He is so clever in so many ways that he paralyses the nerves of astonishment and the muscles of admiration. He is still a young man, but he has already packed into his life a long series of careers, one inside the other, like a Japanese nest of boxes. It would be impossible to get at the last box, which contains the real man, for the process of taking him to pieces would last several years, and long before it was completed he would have enveloped himself in new feats and fresh exploits of actorship, authorship and managership. Seymour Hicks is a syndicate masquerading as a mercurial boy. There is one side of him which is a feverish George Edwardes. There is another side of him which is a popular version of Mr. J. M. Barrie. He is also a nervous incarnation or caricature of Fred Leslie, with a dash of William Terriss, a whiff of Arthur Roberts, a flash of Charles Brookfield, a spice of Sims and Pettitt, to say nothing of a frantic reminiscence of "Augustus Druriolanus."

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He is everybody by turns and nobody long. If he had been born a chameleon, he would have burst himself years ago. His terrifying restlessness haunts the British theatre. His theatrical energy makes other men of energy look like torpid tortoises. It is a blessing that he is not a politician, like Mr. Winston Churchill, or a President, like Mr. Roosevelt, for he would blow the world to pieces with his volcanic vehemence and violence.

He broke loose very young, for he was only sixteen when he played with Willard at the old Olympic. After touring for two years in the provinces, he went to America with the Kendals, where his natural volatility and volubility and excitability and risibility and capability were dangerously intensified. What he needed was a sleeping draught. America gave him a stimulant. Compared to him, the American hustler is a lame and lethargic lobster. If he had not been a brilliant actor-author-manager, he would have been a brilliant journalist. He has a diabolical knowledge of the popular taste. He can tickle the public palate with infallible skill. He is almost hysterically sensitive and almost neurotically responsive to the whims and caprices of the playgoer. He can ferret out what the pleasure-seeker likes, and can give it to him with both hands and with both feet.

His dashing knowingness and swaggering humour

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and electrical dancing have made him an after-dinner favourite. Into his musical pieces he puts his appalling vitality and merciless vivacity. He not only makes himself go, but he makes everybody else go. He floods the stage with light and colour and music and movement. He invented, I believe, the illustrative chorus. He forced the stolid rows of show girls to galvanize themselves into explosive life. He even electrified the stage properties, and compelled the very scenery to join the dance. He is a master of scenic tricks and artifices. He transforms the stage carpenter, and compels him to startle the audience with mechanical jokes and jests. Impish restlessness is the keynote of his stage-management as well as of his acting. He is a man of business in one sense of the word. He has a mania for interpreting and expounding and emphasizing and embroidering and exaggerating and underlining every phrase and every song and every dance.

His personality is magnetic, or, rather, it is electric. He shocks you with laughter. He explodes sensations like mines under your feet. He can cater for a dozen different publics, from the public of childhood that doted on "Bluebell in Fairy-Land" to the public of patriots that gloated over "One of the Best." He can purvey any brand of theatrical food, and he has even dreamed of naturalizing the Passion Play. "I'm a Catholic,"

he once said, "and don't you think, that being so, I realize the fact that there are better things than singing 'A Gay Old Bird'?" One of his best feats of character-acting is Scrooge, and I should not be surprised to hear that he means to play Hamlet and Romeo before he dies. But I hope he will never carry out his threat of being serious, for he is inimitable as an irresponsible light comedian who blazes and sparkles in a tornado of gags and topical sallies and impudent burlesques. His high spirits are higher than anybody else's, and he is full of irrepressible fun and gaiety and merry audacity. His vivacity is always at full pressure and yet it seems spontaneous. His motto is: "Pallas, take thine owl away, and let us have a lark instead."

Just as his wife, Ellaline Terriss, is the everlasting girl, so he is the everlasting boy. His thousand and one theatrical adventures have not taken the steam out of his amazing boyishness. His shrewd sagacity in judging the taste of the public has not soured or shrivelled his youthful eagerness and enterprise. Although he has a hundred irons in the theatrical fire, he preserves his frisky juvenility. Although he builds theatres by the dozen and launches touring companies by the score, he is not withered by work or staled by success. His ebullient frivolity remains untarnished and unchastened. Yet there is a serious

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facet in his glittering pushfulness. He has done the State some service. He has rushed to the rescue of the British Constitution. He has breathed new life into the lungs of the House of Lords. He has injected fresh blood into the veins of our old nobility. He has provided an inexhaustible supply of healthy and handsome mothers for our future aristocracy. No longer need the eldest sons of our peers turn to America for worthy mates and stalwart wives. He is the universal provider of matrimonial beauty for our belted earls. His show girls are the salvation of our anæmic peerage. How he discovers them is a mystery, for the supply never fails. It must be heartrending for Mr. Hicks to see his majestic ladies carried off by heartless young lords, but he never murmurs, he never complains. He resigns them without a sigh, for he feels that he is performing a public duty and a patriotic service. He knows that he is regenerating a decaying institution, and revivifying a dying class. He is not hurt because the House of Lords has callously neglected to pass a resolution thanking him for his self-abnegation. He is content with the applause of his own conscience. He looks for no reward but the silent gratitude of his country.



## THE NEW KNOWLES

THE lecture is an American institution. For some reason or other Americans are fond of lecturing and being lectured. They have an unquenchable passion for knowledge, and they like to get it in capsules and tabloids. America is the land of tabloids, and the lecture is tabloid knowledge. It is culture in a capsule. Mr. R. G. Knowles is an American comedian who has made us laugh for nearly twenty years. He has suddenly determined to give up making us laugh. He has made up his mind to reform himself and to become a serious and solemn person, a lecturer. The other night I laughed at him in the Palace Theatre. He was then a comedian. He wore his familiar tall hat, his familiar white collar, his familiar black necktie, and his familiar white trousers. We know that uniform by heart. We laugh at it because it is an old friend. It awakens memories of forgotten laughter.

We are all getting old. We were young when we first laughed at Mr. Knowles. It is sad to think how long it is since we heard his hoarse voice

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singing "Girlie, Girlie." How he gurgled out the "r" and the "l" in "Gu-r-rlie," in "Cu-r-rly," and in 'Ea-r-rly!" Nobody could gurgle so lusciously and so glutinously as Mr. Knowles. When he came to the chorus we all gurgled an accompaniment, and the hoarse chant of our voices rose up to the roof in a gigantic gurgle. It was like a song sung by a choir of nutmeg-graters. How it rasped and grated! How it swelled huskily in gutturals that scraped and screeched through the smoke and glitter of the music-hall.

We were never tired in those days of "Girlie, Girlie." We liked it because it was Knowles and because Knowles was it. It seemed to express his strange charm. It disengaged his quaint humour. It was pure nonsense, and he was pure nonsense, and as pure nonsense is the rarest thing in this wise world we clung to it and to him. We knew that as soon as he began to gurgle in that ruined voice we should forget the dreadful solemnity of life and become delightfully absurd and deliciously foolish. There was no taint of reason in the humour of Knowles. It was sheer nonsense. The charm of it was its apparent intensity, its simulated passion, its sham vehemence.

We chuckled over the breathlessness of Knowles. I think he invented breathlessness. There never was a comedian so divinely breathless. He sang like a man who was being strangled. We loved his

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strangled voice with its despairing gasps and frenzied spasms. No comedian was a more consummate master of the insane art of lightning patter. Arthur Roberts could patter at breakneck speed, but he often became unintelligible. Now Knowles was never unintelligible, even at his swiftest. The words came out of his thin lips like a volley of duckshot, but every pellet was plain and clear. He never gave you time to think.

Another quality of his humour was its good nature. There was always a lovable element in it. Knowles was a sunny humorist. He made you feel that life was a jolly affair, and that the world was a pleasant residence. His smile was a tonic. It flashed rarely, but when it flashed it lighted up his sombre face with a kind of warm glow. Like all humorists Knowles has a melancholy face, full of dark shadows and haunted with sadness. He looks like an undertaker. The contrast between his jests and his face is monstrous. His eyes are immensely mournful. They are vast dark orbs desolate with unknown sorrows and doleful with mysterious woes. It is pleasant to see drollery coming out of a man like a grave. I wonder whether it is his melancholy that makes him humorous or his humour that makes him melancholy. Perhaps it is the instinct of the artist which provides a funereal background against which his fun is silhouetted.

From the Comedian to the Lecturer is a far cry.

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Knowles the Comedian is not the same man as Knowles the Lecturer. To begin with, the Lecturer does not wear white trousers. It is a shock to see Mr. Knowles in respectable trousers. A glory has departed from him. It is heartbreaking to see him without his tall hat. It is perfect pain to listen to him talking without a band and without limelight. I sighed as I surveyed Mr. Knowles in the garb and guise of conventional civilization. But as he began his "Picture-Chats" I realized that he was a transformed and transfigured Knowles. He spoke with the dignified solemnity of a moral philosopher. He was an antiquary and an archæologist, an historian, and a topographer. He fed us with facts and figures. He drenched us with pious moralizings and pathetic sentiments. He told us beautiful traveller's tales. We saw the true man for the first time. We beheld the naked personality which the anecdotist had concealed.

I had conceived him as a cynic who looked upon life as a jest. He unveiled his heart, and lo! it was the heart of a child, delighting in ancient castles and picturesque costumes, in time-worn cathedrals and weather-stained churches. I wept with him over the desecrated grave of William the Conqueror. I sighed with him over the ashes of Joan of Arc. A man of feeling is Mr. Knowles, and a man of sentiment. There is no flippancy or levity

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in his reverent attitude of admiration for old unhappy far-off things. He is a learned professor whom harsh fate had condemned to buffoonery for the best part of his life, and who is now revenging himself upon his destiny. Soon I become accustomed to the new Knowles. I am awestruck by his erudition. I am humiliated by his voracious memory.

It was with a horrid jar and an aching jerk that I watched him as he turned himself once more out of a Lecturer into a Comedian. The picture faded off the screen, the lights went up, and he stood out against the huge white sheet, looking dreadfully unnatural without his make-up, without his tall hat, and without his white trousers. He told us tales, but they were not the tales he told behind the band in the limelight. He told them slowly, and we yearned for the gasping patter, for the hurried walk up and down the stage. They were the same tales, but virtue had gone out of them. It was not my Knowles. It was a Knowles I knew not. It was the Knowles that is known in private life—Knowles the respectable, Knowles the correct. I was bewildered by the conflict between my old friend and this new friend who was and was not the same. I felt that I had lost more than I gained. I was hurt by the effort to reconcile the old love with the new. I was furtively embarrassed and I think my old friend was furtively embarrassed too. He

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seemed to be a kind of forgery, the Comedian impersonating himself. Perhaps the Comedian is the real man; perhaps the Lecturer is only a myth. I will not allow the image of the Lecturer to obliterate the image of the Comedian. I cling to the quaint grotesque with the tongue of lightning and the battered voice, hoarse with years of husky patter and bronchial anecdote. This Lecturer is a usurper. I implore him to go away. I entreat him to give me back what he has stolen from me, the gurgling voice, the express gabble, the tall hat, the white trousers, and the dog-trot between the wings.

## CHARLES HAWTREY

**I**N this chaotic world it is a pleasure to find a man who can do one thing supremely well. It does not matter what he does, so long as he does it better than anybody else. In his own domain he is monarch of all he surveys. It is not necessary to be a very great man in order to attain a position of pre-eminence in one particular sphere. Indeed, it is your small man who as a rule is able to bring all his being to bear on one special form of activity. The greater the specialist, the smaller the man. The great man is too many-sided and too myriad-minded to go into a groove. Specialism may be described as the small end of nothing sharpened to a point. Mr. Algernon Ashton is an example of this. He has made himself famous by sharpening the small end of nothing. Nothing could be more microscopic than his passion for writing letters to the newspapers, and yet in a few years it made him illustrious.

But perhaps a still more gorgeous specimen of triumphant specialism is Mr. Charles Hawtreys. Mr. Hawtreys is the greatest liar on earth—I mean

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Mr. Hawtrey, the actor, not Mr. Hawtrey, the man. I have no doubt that, in private life, Mr. Hawtrey is a George Washington. Truth to him must be a recreation, nay, it must be almost a dissipation, for, after lying for six nights and two afternoons a week in "Dear Old Charlie" at the Vaudeville, he must be dog-tired of falsehood. He must take to verity as other men take to drink. Truth, I am sure, to him is an intoxicant.

Other men work hard at truth, he works hard at lying. He makes his living by telling lies. Therefore, for him truth is a change of occupation. What exquisite pleasure he must feel when he refreshes his weary mind in a bath of veracity. I do not know whether he has any particular friends upon whom he pours out the vials of his verity, but I am sure it is a privilege to hear him letting himself go. It is a pity that Mr. Hawtrey could not be a politician in his hours of leisure. It would be so easy for him to say what all the others think. He might also be a wonderful journalist in his spare time. Try to imagine what a newspaper edited by Mr. Hawtrey would be like. There are some newspapers (not, of course, in this country) which contain only one truth a day, and that is the date line—sometimes even that strays from the strict path of terminological exactitude. But if Mr. Hawtrey were to edit a newspaper for a week, what things he could say.



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In praising Mr. Hawtrey's fluent falsehood on the stage I do not mean to disparage his rivals in real life. They do their best. It would be cruel to blame them for their clumsy crudity. Mr. Hawtrey, it must be remembered, has devoted his whole life to the perfection of the fine art of lying. It is, as Voltaire said about somebody else, his *métier*. I do not think any real liar could possibly lie so well as Mr. Hawtrey. A lie is not in ordinary men a beautiful thing, but he makes it as delicate as a daffodil and as dreamy as a sunset. He forces you to fall half in love with easeful lying and indolent falsehood. It is not easy to tell a lie and it is not pleasant to tell a lie, but Mr. Hawtrey makes the thing look both easy and pleasant. He has what I may, without offence, call the stage liar's face. Nature has endowed him with a smooth and polished suavity of feature which is irresistibly fascinating. The sleek plausibility of his sudden smile would deceive a money-lender. Touching is the careful pathos of his look when for a second his veracity is challenged by some bewildered dupe. Then, when one of his lies is tottering, it is piquant to watch the thin cloud of anguish which flits across his face, to be followed instantly by a smiling flash of white teeth under a trim black moustache.

As I sat watching Mr. Hawtrey lying his way through three acts, I fell to wondering whether

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there were many undiscovered liars like him in real life. It is a sad and serious thought that there may be men who are so proficient in the art of lying that they go through life without being detected. Perhaps some of these men may be eminent. They have the divine gift and grace of never being found out. They may dine with you and borrow your money, and yet never allow you to suspect the truth. I am sure I could never catch Mr. Hawtrey napping if I met him in society. He would inspire me with the most powerful trust and the most desperate confidence. If he were to tell me that I myself am a liar I should believe him.

What I like most about Mr. Hawtrey is his silky tongue. He can talk so alluringly that you feel it would be wicked to doubt him. The quality of his voice is caressingly persuasive. It unhinges your judgment. I am not sure that it is right to allow Mr. Hawtrey to act as a public expositor of falsehood, for as one listens to his lyrical lying, one feels that truth is a rather dull and stupid thing. I am afraid that Mr. Hawtrey must exercise a very evil influence on the young and the innocent. His daring adventures in darkest falsity must inspire in the breast of unsophisticated youth a wild desire to imitate him. Like all great games, lying satisfies the human craving for danger. It is as keen a stimulus as Alpine climbing, or tight-rope dancing, or hunting. The really fine liar is

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always on the edge of disaster, but he manages to save himself at the last moment. It must be glorious to feel that at any moment you may be found out. Compared with the joy of lying the joy of telling the truth is crude and coarse. It is very easy to tell the plain truth, but it is very hard to tell a decorative lie, a lie dyed in fast colours and warranted unshrinkable.

I often amuse myself by trying to pick out the liars who are public men and the public men who are liars. It is really not very difficult, because the public liar sooner or later gives himself away. In the exuberance of his mendacity he makes some statement which somebody can disembowel. Oddly enough, one lie is not enough to ruin a statesman. Indeed, I doubt whether two lies would destroy the reputation of a Front Bencher. For some reason or other in politics a certain moral latitude is allowed. Your statesman is permitted a rivulet of truth meandering through a meadow of falsehood. Indeed, I doubt whether any man ever reached the highest heights of politics without doing some damage to mathematical accuracy. The politician who hesitates to lie is lost.

There is one thing which I admire in Mr. Hawtrey. He seems to enjoy his work. All really great liars are artists. They lie for the lie's sake. They yearn after the pure and perfect

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beauty of the ideal falsehood. They strive after a flawless perfection of form in their falsehoods, chiselling them as a sculptor chisels a block of marble. I am sure that the heroic liar does not lie for mean and sordid ends. He wishes to express himself just as a poet wishes to express himself, to pour forth his soul in profuse strains of premeditated artfulness. Often he lies awake in the watches of the night thinking about new flights of fancy, new curves of imagination. Often with rapt face he gazes at the stars, hungering for the solace of some lie that will shake the universe. And I grieve to say that falsehood is not nearly so decrepit as it is the fashion to assume. Truth is great, and it does prevail—sometimes ; but falsehood is one of the big facts in life. Historians know that it is as absurd to say that truth makes history as to say that history makes truth. I am sure that falsehood has made nearly as much history as truth. The worst of it is that lies are more destructive than truth.

If you want to pay a woman a compliment, you tell her a lie, for the essence of a compliment is its insincerity. If it were sincere it would not be a compliment. Why a woman should like a man to tell her a lie is one of those things which I cannot understand. She knows it is a lie, and you know it is a lie. Why, then, tell it ? For instance, a woman always likes to believe a man when he

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says he loves her. If he tells her that he does not love her, she does not respect him for telling her the truth. She hates him for it. "When I was young," said an old man, "if I paid a woman a compliment, she took it for a declaration, but now that I am old if I make her a declaration she takes it for a compliment." The social relations between men and women are honeycombed with lies. It is a part of the great game of sex. Why it should be so is puzzling, for it is hard to understand why love is a liar. I suppose it is due to the fact that men and women are humiliated by the discovery that their moods and emotions are not fixed and unchangeable. Rather than admit the possibility of any variation in their frame of mind, they lie. Mr. Hawtrey is a model liar who might with advantage be studied by all your diseased idealists whose souls are moth-eaten with mouldy chivalry and prehistoric sentiment. He will teach you how to make your lies sound in wind and limb. The only person who will know you are a liar is yourself.

## THE NEW LYCEUM

THE other night I enjoyed myself vastly at the Lyceum Theatre. It was my first visit to it since the days of Irving. Do not imagine that I was greatly shocked by the change in the bill of fare, for when I first came to London and paid my first visit to the Lyceum, the play that I saw was "The Dead Heart." It is not a very far cry from "The Dead Heart" to "The Midnight Wedding." Virtue in the latter may be a little more virtuous, and vice may be a little more vicious, but after all it is a difference without a distinction. The real change in the Lyceum is in its decorations. The old Lyceum was very dim and very dingy; the new Lyceum is almost hysterically gaudy and almost explosively gay. It is riotously gilt from its eyebrows to its heels, and its skirts are flounced with mirrors.

The audience has been transformed as completely as the auditorium. The stalls have been democratized by the reduction of the price from half a guinea to five shillings, with the result that Tom in tweeds rubs shoulders with Dick in evening

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dress. There is a magnificent orchestra which supplies slow music while the curtain is up and merry music while it is down. The note of the new Lyceum is a genial informality. The audience is simply a happy family composed of the worshippers of truth and the upholders of poetical justice. We all weep together, we all laugh together, and we all hiss together.

I had not been in my seat ten minutes when I felt that I was a member of a happy family. The hero was a young gentleman with an air of sulky carelessness, tumbled black locks, and a couple of remarkably fine eyes which blazed volleys of pathos across the footlights. A dark mystery veiled his birth, but we were all pleased when he turned out to be the morganatic son of the dashing Crown Prince of Savonia, who had cruelly cast away his wife for a crown. All through the play the Crown Prince ladles out remorse, which the hero invariably rejects with majestic scorn. We cheer his scorn ; we glory in his renunciation. It is comforting to know that renunciation is still popular in our family. We may not practise it extensively ourselves, but we adore it in our hero. The more he gives up the better we like him. A good story is told of that famous manufacturer of melodramas, the late Mr. Pettitt. He was conducting Mr. Frohman over his magnificent country house. With a sweeping gesture he cried, "All

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built out of self-sacrifice." I think that is a beautiful story. It is not the men who appeal to the mean and ignoble passions of humanity who amass great fortunes. No! It is the men who glorify impossible virtues and unattainable ideals, and who teach us that self-sacrifice is a good thing in itself, even when it is gorgeously irrelevant and splendidly unnecessary.

In these days when all the villains of history have been whitewashed, and the new theology has taught us to disbelieve even in sin, it is encouraging to find that melodrama is not on the down-grade. The moral law, having been driven out of the Church, has taken refuge in the Theatre. The villain in "The Midnight Wedding" is steeped to the lips in villainy. He has a very black moustache and a very black heart. He has also very black eyes and very white teeth, which are always on parade. His pursuit of the heroine is as devilish and as dastardly as the heart of man could desire. We do not pity him, and we do not palliate his crime. We do not ascribe his depravity to heredity, although we know that every villain is descended from another villain, and that the blood of the first villain flows in the veins of the last. We do not Lombrosoize his criminality. No, we hate him with all our heart, and we hiss him with all our strength. When he climbs up the wall into the heroine's bedroom,



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heavens ! how we hiss ! When the hero climbs up after him (using the same footholes), heavens ! how we cheer ! We go mad with joy when the hero throttles him, throws him on the floor, and puts a revolver to his head. When at last, after three acts of variegated infamy, he is impaled squirming on the hero's sword, our cup of bliss is full, and we are grateful to the hand which keeps his corpse balanced on its side till the curtain falls, so that we may contemplate the fate of the wicked. Our family may not be wholly composed of saints, but at least we do not palter with sin, or shed maudlin tears on the carcass of the sinner.

Dearly as we love the hero, and venomously as we hate the villain, I think the heroine fills a larger place in our hearts. It is she who opens wide the sluices of our grief. It is she who wades through seas of suffering in order to stimulate our sympathetic tears. She is a princess, and in our family the sorrows of a princess are more moving than any others. Her voice thrills us, for it vibrates with no ordinary emotions, and it is enriched by the gurgling undulations of agonized rhetoric. It rings and clangs and sighs and trembles with unflagging intensity. Its tremendous music is accompanied by a vast host of gestures and postures, bitter smiles, piercing glances, clenched fists, stamping feet, tossings of the head, dishevelled hair, wringing of the hands, moans and

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groans and wails, to say nothing of sumptuous robes and a perfect dream of a nightgown. Our heroine is plucky withal. Disguised in a military uniform she vows to shed the last d-e-r-r-rop of her b-b-lood in order to save the manly hero from the diabolical machinations of the demoniacal villain. When the villain rushes upon her with flashing sword a spasm of horror shudders through our whole family, and it is with difficulty that we restrain ourselves from rushing over the orchestra to her rescue.

The elocution of the heroine delights us. We love her trick of beginning a sentence with a gulp and ending it with a gasp. We dote on her guttural vowels and her unctuously oily "r's." When she cries "D-e-a-r!" shivers of cold joy trickle down our spines. Her "No!" is more than a negative; it is an annihilation. Her tears are not drops; they are Niagaras. Her sigh is a roaring gale, and her sob is a tornado. At times her hoarse passion roughens her vocal cords, and her voice seems to be ploughing furrows in her throat. She is indeed something like a heroine, and we are all ready to die for her.

In our family we do not care for the fine shades of character or the meagre ambiguities of emotion. We are plain, blunt men, and we like plain, blunt passions. We do not care to be titillated by evasive hints and vague suggestions. We prefer

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to be thumped on the back and smitten on the chest. We like our humour as well as our pathos hot and strong, and our jokes cannot be rubbed in too well. Nobody can rub in a joke more vigorously than our family melodramatist. When he goes in for comic relief he relieves you over and over again. Heavens ! how we laugh ! It is well that the Lyceum has a sliding roof, for our laughter would blow any ordinary roof into the sky. In our family we are not ashamed to laugh. We know that laughter is good for us, and we let it roar itself out of our lungs without any morbid affectation. We laugh till we double up and hold our sides. We laugh the bugles off our bonnets and the feathers out of our boas and the chocolates out of our cheeks.

That is why we go home happy, for our Katharsis has been complete. We have been purged with pity and terror, with tears, hisses, and laughter.

## DRURY LANE

LONDON is not Paris, and a general repetition at Drury Lane is vastly different from a *répétition générale* at a Parisian theatre. To begin with, Paris could not produce a playwright like our own Hall Caine, or a play like "The Bondman." In saying this I do not mean to disparage Paris. It is not her fault. She likes art in her immorality : we like morality in our art.

Cynics may sneer at our simplicity. They may even libel it or label it hypocrisy. But that need not abash us. For our love of the austere moral virtues is the salt of our literature and our life. When that decays England will no longer be England. The popularity of Mr. Hall Caine is a guarantee of its vigour. It is a certificate of its national health. In all his novels he has upheld the good and the true. He has never swerved from his loyalty to high principles and Christian ideals. Hence his vogue. Hence also his power at Drury Lane.

Drury Lane is our national theatre. It is homely. There is a deep truth in the simple song which Patti has sung all over the world. In a

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profound sense "there is no place like home." Drury Lane is the theatre of home, and there is no place like Drury Lane. It is the refuge of the homely virtues. It is home at home. That is why we love it. No matter how fiercely the storms of decadence rage elsewhere, Drury Lane is faithful to the English ideal of simple goodness. Its moral tone is uncorrupted by meretricious modernity. It is impervious alike to the blandishments of wit and the seductions of irony. It denies the insolent demands of moral realism and irreverent humour. It holds high in a cynical age the banner of the ideal.

Drury Lane has not always been lucky enough to secure the services of men of genius like Hall Caine, men who combine the technique of morality with the conviction of it. The Drury Lane dramatist has not always been sincere. His head has sometimes been better than his heart. Mr. Caine has the head as well as the heart. In this he is unique. If Drury Lane was not built for him, at least he was built for Drury Lane. He has the rare power of handling moral passion in large masses, of moving it about as Napoleon moved his armies, of launching it with terrific force against the legions of evil. His characters are moral Titans, convulsed with huge emotions, torn by gigantic sorrows, scarred by immense hates, and aureoled with infinite loves.

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By coming to Drury Lane Hall Caine came to his own. His *répétition générale* is really an enormous At Home rather than a dress rehearsal. It is a national tribute to the inspired interpreter of our national ideals—the ideals of domestic honour, simple fidelity, and brotherly love. It is on these ideals that the sweetness of home has been founded. There is no word in French or in any other language which can translate the meaning of the English word "home."

As I look round old Drury this afternoon I rejoice over the defeat of the little cynics and satirists who have for so long sneered at the healthy sentiments of the simple. Where is the hectic morbidity of Blank to-day? Where is Dashe? Where is Thingumabob? Gone. Dead. Forgotten. The heart of the English people is sound at the core. I can hear it beating to-day in Drury Lane. It throbs in sympathy with Jason, as it sees in him the triumph of the Christian ideal of forgiveness over the Pagan ideal of revenge.

It may be fantastic, but I discern in the stupendous realism of the sulphur-mine a divine symbol of vanquished evil and victorious good. It is a moral fumigation. The fumes of the sulphur have slain the microbes of immorality which have been eating the heart out of our national drama. In the stalls men and women are weeping. Tears fall from the gallery. There are sobs in the pit and the

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dress circle. Even the critics are awed by this solfatara of wholesome sentiment. A great actress is sitting behind me. Claspings her daughter in her arms, she cries hysterically, "I can't bear it! I can't bear it." Few dramatists could win a finer tribute than that. I doubt if even Shakespeare himself has ever torn such a cry from the human heart. Even Euripides, the human, with his droppings of warm tears, could not extract a testimony more sincere.

What is more notable than the intensity of this nerve-tempest is its quality. This great audience is no ordinary mob. It is the cream and flower of English rank, commerce, and culture. Men and women who have grown grey in the various professions sit humbly in obscure corners. Even actor-managers and members of Parliament do not disdain to sink their fame in the sea of admiration. Great novelists and men of letters, scholars and aristocrats rub shoulders with fallen or forgotten stars of the stage. For Drury Lane is democratic. Even the voice of a baby is heard at intervals, and although the superior person may smile, I think that the presence of a little child is the crown and climax of a scene that can never be forgotten by those who are privileged to play even a humble part in it. For is it not true that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings praise may be ordained? Home is naught without infant prattle, and I think

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the cry of the little one is the homeliest touch of all. It strikes the note of English pathos and simplicity. Could that note be struck in Paris?

Drury Lane is the children's theatre. Its old walls are tapestried with their laughter. By a happy chance the gracious perfume of childhood is also wafted over the footlights. The sight of the little boy and girl saying their evening prayer at Mrs. Patrick Campbell's knees touches the hardest heart. Every woman, whether she belongs to the "smart set" or to the theatrical profession, feels a spasm of sweet pain as she hears the little girl talking to her dolly: "I kiss you—you not cry." Not one of us but would like to kiss the girlie on the spot.

It is little touches of this sort that reveal the great dramatist. What pure memories are not called up by the music of the church bells, by the sound of the Harvest Hymn? Compared to these delicate fragilities of sentiment, even the real cows, the real haystack, and the real pump seem crude, although they, too, play their part in the homely idyll of kind hearts and simple faith.



## AT THE OPERA

**T**HE season was singing its top-note. Fashion had not yet grown feeble with dinners and dances, luncheons and garden parties, theatres and concerts, races and regattas, polo and tennis, croquet and cricket. Everywhere everything, everybody everywhere. The wheel of pleasure spinning at its maddest. The jejune boredom of July still far off. Digestions not yet dilapidated. Dowagers fabricating marriages and debutantes neck-deep in flirtations. Every afternoon a block in Piccadilly. Bond Street wearing its most expensive smile. The tea-rooms and the restaurants doing a roaring trade. In fine, the great mundane movement going at its highest speed. Little London rotating furiously. What is Little London? It is the golden hub round which the huge wheel of Great London revolves.

What is the diamond centre of the golden hub? Well, I suppose it is the Opera. There you may see the rabble of the rich, the mob of society, the rag-tag and bob-tail of beparagraphed men and women. There are divers ways of going to the

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Opera, and each provides you with a different point of view. If you go to the gallery you will hear the music better than anywhere else, for there it is not garrotted by gabble. The more you pay for your seat the less you hear. The gallery has another advantage. The opera there is singer-proof and fashion-proof. Punch and Judy on the stage and in the boxes become marionettes. Judy's tiara gleams with the desultory glitter of broken glass on a brick wall. Judy's shoulders are quite remote. The opulent charms in boxes and stalls are as unreal as waxworks.

In the stalls your point of view changes. You are distracted by the proximity of imaginary greatness and fabled loveliness. Don Juan in a box is more thrilling than Don Juan on the stage. If you are schooled in scandal, you are more anxious to fit the cap of gossip than to follow the score. How pale is the artificial sin and virtue behind the footlights compared to the real sin and the real virtue behind ropes of pearls and cascades of diamonds.

But if you are in one of the boxes you have yet another point of view. To-night Dives has lent us his Box. Let us play at being Dives for a few hours. Our cab is one of the joints in the crocodile of vehicles which crawls slowly round Long Acre into Bow Street. Outside the Opera House, that vast coal-scuttle, we are waved aside by a policeman's fat white glove. Alighting, we dive between the tail

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of a brougham and the head of a horse. In the vestibule we wait for our friends. Others are waiting. We watch the great doors swinging open, and we note that there is no janitor to open them. The daintiest beauty must push her way in. One pretty girl narrowly escapes a blow on her fair brow as the door swings back. The smart men are all carrying canes with round knobs of coloured stone.

Our Box is in the Grand Tier. As we walk round the corridor we read the august names on the doors of the boxes. Our Box is a stage Box, and we seem to walk miles before we reach it. The attendant opens the door. We find ourselves in a tiny room containing four armchairs and a sofa. Below us is the orchestra, a long, deep, dark trench full of wind and brass, grotesque with tangled faces and sawing arms. Instead of seeing M. Messenger's back, we see his keen face, with its curved moustache, serious, vigilant, absorbed. We are too close to the stage. We see it stripped of all illusion. So close are we that we can almost shake hands with Caruso. If you place a book too near your eyes you cannot read. So it is with the stage. Propinquity smears the glamour, blurs the mirage. The lines do not flow into each other. The spectacle jerks. The physical effort of the singers is obtrusive. We watch their lungs working like bellows. We see them standing in the wings, waiting for their cue. We catch glimpses of the stage-manager through a

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secret panel that opens and shuts in the scenery. We detect asides, by-play, whisperings, *æillades* among the chorus. The grease-paint is too palpable. Lips are too red. Eyebrows and eyelashes are too black. We see the feet of the players with absurd distinctness. Only one mime retains his glamour unimpaired. It is the Commander. Is the Statue alive? We cannot tell? His face is as immobile and as expressionless as any face in the audience.

But the best way to see and hear the opera in a box is not to look at the stage at all. On the wall of our box facing the stage is a large mirror. Lean back lazily in your chair and look at the procession of images in this mirror that is like the magical mirror of the Lady of Shalott :

And moving through a mirror clear  
Shadows of the world appear.

The coarse, meretricious pretences of stageland are transformed by this enchanted shield. The breath of romance is blown upon them. They infect our imagination with a sense of fantasy. As the web of gestures is woven, we seem to behold the show of shadows that is life. The music no longer appears too passionate for prosaic flesh decorated by perruquier and costumier. The solidity of torso and tights evanishes in this soft, clear well, and in its place we gaze upon airy phantoms who are carried by the music on its crest. Gazing, we dream. Time and place slip

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away from our souls, and we lose our very egoism in a charmed bemusement. Don Giovanni pursues Zerlina, and we see the jest of sex running like a scarlet thread through the pearls of years that are the rosary of time. He defies the Commander, and we see the eternal rebellion of the eternal rebel from Prometheus to Satan, from Borgia to Byron. Donna Anna and Donna Elvira weep, and we hear the tears of all the women in the world. But if we turn our head and look across the footlights, artifice ridicules our sentiment. Caruso's golden voice loses its subtle echoes of far mysteries. All is jarred and marred. Why does nobody build a mirror-theatre in which the actors are neither heard nor seen directly? We should have mirror-plays which would enable us to recapture our lost illusions. Life at the third instead of the second remove!

As we gaze on the play in the mirror a thought arises. How many shadows have stolen across its polished surface? All the operas have stepped silently over it, and yet they have left no trace of footfall, no print of finger, no blur of sigh or laughter. Even as these are we. We, too, pass across the mirror of life, and are as if we had never been. Which is the less real—the audience or the play? Ah, let us look at the audience. The curtain falls, the lights blaze up. Suddenly all the glory of the great opera house glitters in our eyes. We see it as the singer sees it, waves upon waves of

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gleaming throats and marble arms, rolling in long white lines from the far roof down the balcony into the stalls, and breaking into foam of flesh against the footlights. The marionettes in the boxes are like painted spectators at a painted tourney. How stiff and straight the women sit! I am always puzzled by this ability of the fragile fair. By and by we grow self-conscious under the converging fire of lorgnettes. What are we? Who shall we be? It is but an edict of humour. Shall I be an earl? Will you be a marchioness? Let us be great for ten minutes. For life is only an opera, and we can cast ourselves for any part we please. Let us ennoble ourselves like these mimes, and demonstrate the vanity of rank by donning and doffing it like a glove. In the end the mirror of Dives will be as vacant as the mirror of Lazarus. We are all shadows of shadows, images of images, ghosts of ghosts.

## IN ROTTEN ROW

**T**HERE is a Rotten Row in Hyde Park. There is also a Rotten Row in the Isle of Dogs. It is a dock for dying ships, a marine hospital, where the bones of old sea-pacers rest, wearily waiting for the knacker.

It is a fine morning. A fresh easterly wind is blowing up the Thames. All sorts of craft are coming up on the racing tide that is carrying with it faint rumours of the salt sea. Sprit-sail barges with tall masts and wind-worn, brown canvas are heeling over as they tack smartly through the traffic, the yellow water curling into creamy fountains round their bows. Here and there a moored barge tosses a mist of spars and cordage into the air. The Council steamboats buzz from pier to pier like bees. A waterman sculls about the front door of a dock, ready to pick up the ropes of a steamer just in from the River Plate, with crates of fruit from Las Palmas piled up dizzily on her deck. His neat Wherry is bepainted with a score of flags. He blows a whistle. Is he calling a hansom? No, he is signalling to the pilot. Hard by, a stout

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white-bearded little man, with the letters "L. I. D." on his peaked cap, is waiting to superintend the opening of the dock gates, and the scraping and warping of the home-comer into her berth. Strings of lighters laden to the lips are being towed by dirty little tugs. Stray dinghys are crawling about. There goes one with three Customs-searchers in their dark blue livery. In all directions there is bustle and fuss, hoot of sirens, clatter of cranes, rattle of derricks, shriek of steam whistles.

But we are bound for Rotten Row. Leaving the waltzing river craft behind us, we plunge into the labyrinth of the docks. Soon we are hopelessly lost in the tangle of sheds and square sheets of water with their smooth sills, their bewildering vistas of warehouses, roofs, slender mast-heads, fat funnels, and church spires. In this queer jumble of land and water everything seems mixed into an amphibious nightmare. We wander round and round, and after an hour find ourselves where we started. To the landlubber all ships seem the same, but gradually we clutch at dim discrepancies. The *President*, for instance, is like nothing else in this aquarium. She reminds one of Noah's Ark. She is half a house and half a ship. The old *President* was captured from the Americans during the War of Independence. Her figurehead, a jolly white-haired old gentleman, was stuck on the gunboat *Garnet*, and now stares blandly at the



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Naval Reserve men who come for their annual drill. A queer craft she looks, a corrugated iron shed glued on the top of her slim flanks, quick-firers nosing out of a Humphrey iron chapel, a rough gangway running along the roof, with the Union flag at one end and the white ensign at the other. Inside, raw Naval Reserve officers are drilling raw Naval Reserve gun crews, stolid petty officers whispering hints with a sly twinkle in their eyes.

A few steps, and we reach Rotten Row at last. It is a desolate oblong, silent, melancholy, forlorn. It seems to be miles from the busy wharves. In a dejected row, huddled close together like lepers, lie all sorts of lost ships, waiting dismally for the end. Here are the Thames steamers which once carried many a merry mob of trippers to Greenwich and to Kew. They are rust-eaten and grimy. Their decks are warped, their plates are peeling, yet here they loll, eating dock dues day by day. They are like the unwashed, unshaven dock loafers who lounge round "The Blue Post," and whom no man hires and no man pities. On the other side of Rotten Row a spanking American steam yacht mocks their misery. She is the toy of some New York multi-millionaire, and every inch of her gleams and glistens with paint and polish. She is burnished like an Exhibition model, and her white sides flash in the sun. No muslined beauty in

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the real Rotten Row is daintier than this fine lady, her very anchor chains galvanized into a golden glory.

The ironic antithesis is too cruel, so we turn sadly away in quest of docks less eloquent of decadence. Alas! we find only empty squares of deserted water. Where is the hum of trade? We walk wearily along empty sheds, and meet only drowsy policemen and shabby loiterers. In South Dock our spirits revive. The lonely silence here is touched with romance, for snuggling in a corner we find a forest of tall masts, criss-crossed cordage, and tapering spars. Here are the last of the wind-jammers. As we walk along the quay under the jib-booms, we are assailed by the pathos of the moribund. These iron fairies are also within hail of Rotten Row. They, too, are waiting for the "dead-launch" that is the doom of the sailing-ship. Their topsails will take the Trades no more. They are dying game, for they have nailed the shark's tail to their jib-booms. They have caught their sharks on the Line, but the shark of steam is stalking them, and soon they will be swallowed by its insatiable maw. A knot of men are talking under the *Wiscombe Park*, under her mocking motto, *Absque Labore Nihil*. We edge into the yarn. They are seamen looking for a berth on one of the clippers. Presently a doleful sailor joins them. He has seen the "old man." He

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shakes his head. She has been sold to the Italians. The new owners want no British hands. A drizzle of mournful gossip drops from the dreary group. They are an epitome of our mercantile marine. One is an old West Indian negro, skin of shining mahogany, squat nose, toothless, his crinkled wool a sooty white. Another is a Swede, voluble in broken English. There is also a bald old tar who talks of a famous owner, one John Allen. Nobody like John Allen. He would come down in his snuff-coloured coat with his lunch in his pocket, and scatter largesse along the quays. But he is gone, and his fleet of sailing-ships is sold. White Jack and Black Peter weep over John Allen. A cynical seaman jeers at these praises of past times. "Why do the owners prefer foreigners? Because they don't strike or drink or play Old Harry. You're cursing now. Wait till the turbines come in!"

His eyes rest on men who are crawling like flies along a topsail yard. He laughs bitterly. "Well," we say, "at any rate the riggers are busy." He laughs again and spits derisively. "Riggers! Them ain't riggers; them's the crew. What do the riggers do, hey? Why, walks about like the rest of us. That's the only trade left in the Port o' London."

Is it quite so bad? Alas! everywhere the same dolorous tale is told. We trudge from dock to

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dock, and the shipless water glares at us with its glassy eye. The few vessels we see are waiting for freights that tarry. Dock officials, thirty years in the service, are glum and gloomy. Nothing doing. Wharfingers and dock companies cutting each other's throats. Suddenly it dawns upon me that Rotten Row is stretching all along the river from basin to basin, wharf to wharf, quay to quay. The rusting penny steamers are only one end of a chain of decay. These docks are but dead lagoons mirroring a phantom past. The Port of London is choking, not with argosies of commerce, but with barnacled monopolies and out-of-date methods. The fate of Tyre and Sidon is overtaking her. Nothing can repeople her once populous waterside. Her docks will ere long be lonely reservoirs visited only by the barren tides. Her sceptre will pass to Liverpool and Southampton and Antwerp. Ichabod will be written on the Tower Bridge. When Macaulay's New Zealander explores the wilderness of Millwall and Poplar and Wapping, he will perhaps find boys sailing toy boats in the basins, and old palsied patriarchs, with the letters "L. I. D." on their caps, dismally looking on. *Absque Labore Nihil*. Nothing without work. Without work—nothing. Is that the epitaph of the Port of London?

## LOVE UNDER THE LEAVES

**I**N a London June it is well to be lazily young. It is also well to be lazily in love. Youth in love and love in youth is life's acme. This Sunday morning as I stand on the platform at Paddington I slide into a golden mood of sentiment, for the grey station is fragrantly aglow with laughing romance in cool white ducks and fresh white serge. Trysting lovers are scattering smiles in all directions. It is a parliament of joys. I catch the contagion of tenderness. My heart melts. I pity the cab horses and the porters, and the stuffed dog in his lonely grave of glass. Why cannot youth be in love for ever and love be always young? I hear the leafy Thames whispering across the miles to the dusty-souled Londoner, whispering with the sun and the wind and the water and the green rustle of dipping branches and "the dreamy drip of oars" in his ancient voice. And as I obey the call I sorrow for the millions I leave behind in the hot and desolate City, for pity is half a pleasure's pleasure. The joy of life is woven out of compassion for the dead. The best cure for

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despondency is a walk in Kensal Green. There are no suicides in cemeteries.

At Slough we see the towers and turrets of Windsor Castle like a grey hole neatly cut out of the blue skirt of the sky. A fluttering flag solidifies the vague pattern. The King is there. What is he doing at this moment? Is he as happy as we are? It is hard to think of a king apart from his treadmill of ceremonial toils. Our mental image of him is a confused jumble of coronations, marriages, foundation-stones, bows, and hat-liftings. What is his private mood? Has he time to feel, and ability to be? . . . But we are at Taplow, and as we flash past we see the glittering river thrust through the trees like the shining shield of a warrior in ambush. The gleaming glimpse thrills us. We expect.

At Maidenhead the platform turns suddenly white with frocks and flannels, and down the stairs we go, filling the dingy tunnel with the scented swish of petticoats. Then some of us whirr off in a motor, some in a natty dogcart, some in a sober fly, and some on foot. But we all wend riverward. It is a long, dull mile through Maidenhead to the water's edge, and for the pedestrian the walk to Bray is lovelier. Only the frumps and the fogeys condescend to the dreary prose of the hired launch. For youth in love and love in youth there is only one vessel—the punt. Even the

eggshell shallop that leaps at each oarstroke is a kind of ferry, fit only for your Charon. As for the canoe, it is a misogynistic craft, imposing a dreadful decorum and an inhuman immobility upon its rigid passengers. The gondola is a bizarre anomaly, meet only for cloaked and hooded moonlight, sharp dense shadows, and over-peering palaces. The dinghy is a squat platitude planned for matrimonial indifference. Love in a dinghy is unimaginable. You can go errands in it, way-laying the butcher and the baker on the towing-path, but it is not fit for wreathed smiles.

The perfect lover must be a perfect punter. The art of punting is nearly as complex as the art of love. It must be learned in a dark secrecy, for the novice is lamentably ludicrous, and to be ludicrous in love is to be lost. There is a double dose of feminine perversity in the punt. She loathes to move in a parallel line with the bank. She likes to sprawl across the stream. She resents violence. She must be gently beguiled with caressing touches. If you are brutal, she spins derisively, blocking the traffic, and drawing down on you the cold ironical stare of scorn. Public opinion on the River is intolerably pitiless. It scourges physical clumsiness with scorpions of contempt. It is strange that men are more bitterly humiliated by manual than by mental incompetence. I do not sweat with shame when I write

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a slovenly sentence. I do sweat with shame when I am rebuked by a lock-keeper for some breach of the River code. There is no spiritual ignominy so deep as the fleshly ignominy of the wretch who gets his punt askew at the lock's mouth or who inadvertently spears a lady with his pole.

The most dreadful anguish of the soul is as nothing compared to the agony of the man whose pole sticks in the Thames mud, and who clings to it the millionth fraction of a second too long. Then comes the triumph of the punt. She softly glides away, making the acute angle of pole and man horribly obtuse. For a wild spasm of time the law of equilibrium shudders, then the immaculate martyr flops with his pole into the silver flood. Does she ever forgive him? A woman can face fearful sorrows for the sake of him she loves. But this crime no woman can pardon. Mental or moral turpitude she can nobly extenuate; for physical shortcomings she has no pity. I suppose she is still haunted by atavistic memories. There is a drop of the Sabine in every woman's blood.

The River Girl is a type. She is the product of the punt. She is an athletic indolence, a lithe laziness, a coquettish vigour. She is Diana with a dash of Aphrodite. She uses the punt alternately as a couch and as a stage. Her seductions are infinite. I do not know whether she is more alluring in action or in repose. Do you see that



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young Sultan lying luxuriously on empurpled cushions, smoking the pipe of deep content? His half-closed eyes gaze dreamily past his toes at the rhythmic girl wielding the rhythmic pole. She is a white glamour of fluent curves. Her bare, dimpled arms show warm against her gown, and her body whips and bends like a fishing-rod. Standing straight as a reed, she plunges her pole vertically into the breast of the Thames, then grasping it high above her head she pushes the earth behind her well-poised feet, as she slowly bends into a swelling line of melting grace, a bent bow whose string is the pole. Then she is erect again, and the pole comes trailing aslant through the water till it is vertical once more. The drops glisten in the sun as they drip from her fingers, but they fall clear away from her dress. She is an artist, a wonder of delicate girlhood, a blend of strength and beauty, cool and pure and gracile as Artemis or Atalanta.

Another picture. Two sisters are punting under the hanging woods of Cliveden. They are silhouetted snowily against the green curtain. They move in faultless time like mowers swinging scythes. Their poles are always parallel. Their points strike the stream at the same moment. It is a delicious duet of girlhood, every limb in tune.

The River Girl in repose is more sensuous. She lies undulating on her cushions like Goya's

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Maja, a Japanese parasol shielding her subtle face from the sun. She, too, is an artist, cosmetically groomed, a tinted Venus. Her champagne-coloured shoes and slim ankles veiled with cobweb silk are as daintily unreal as the faint flush on her cheek and the dull bronze sheen on her carefully-rippled hair. The boy punting at her feet is languidly supple, elegantly alert. His oiled hair shines, not a lock awry. His broad-striped shirt, his leather belt, his spotless ducks, his starched collar, and his buckskin shoes vie with his clear, tanned skin in polished propriety. It is a duet of the sexes. The wise river slides smoothly under this and many another mated pair, and with it slide the hours from noon till sundown. The trees are choral with invisible birds. Here and there dense groves of monkey-flower burst into flame and hawthorns scatter milky perfume. In the silent backwaters where the trees dip their green branches in the stream the hidden punt nestles against the bank, and as you pass bright eyes look out dreamily under a superfluous parasol. Was that a muffled kiss or the blurred whistle of a throstle? Only a churl would press the question. On and on we glide, until we come upon a browsing ass in a clover-field. His long ears are mirrored in the unwrinkled water. He is Nature's comment on life and youth and love. For in his own way he also is happy.

## A STUDY IN ICE

**T**HE Prime Minister is a man of ice and iron. From my perch in the Gallery I peer down at him sideways. On my left hand "F. C. G." is busy sketching somebody. His fierce, hairy face is curiously unlike his blandly amiable caricatures. As I glance from his ferocious eyebrows down to Mr. Asquith's polished steel mask, I wonder whether it also is discrepant. What is the real Asquith?

The Asquith I look down upon is a thunder-cloud with a silver lining; his face the thunder-cloud, and his white hair the silver lining. White hair softens the features of other men, but it hardens his. It lies chill and severe on his temples. He is a man of snow with a marble mouth and a jaw of steel, a man of ice with frozen eyes and a frozen voice. A frostbitten man with a wintry mind and an Arctic soul. A lonely man with a bitterly desolate face, and a rare smile like glacial sunshine.

My eyes wander from the cold Prime Minister to his fiery followers. The contrast between the leader

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and the led is absolute. The Prime Minister is an iceberg sitting on a volcano. The ice-cold phrases fall icily from the icy lips. They are beautiful phrases, beautiful as the crystals on the window-pane in winter; the best words in the best order, gleaming and glittering translucently like Polar icicles. There is no redundancy in this laconic utterance, no pleonasm, no hesitance, no frayed ends of speech, no hemming or hawing, no groping after reluctant felicities. His phrases are disdainfully faultless. You can see his mind working behind his words like a show engine working behind clear glass, working without strain or stress, fret or friction, a perfect machine, automatically lubricated, exquisitely balanced, a miracle of bright, smooth mechanism. The voice is pure, cold perfection, passionlessly resonant, heartlessly melodious. It never falters or wavers, but rolls out its precise cadences in measured lengths. Its articulations are unerringly accurate, every vowel and every consonant cut clean, as if the keen lips were sharp knives and the keen tongue a guillotine.

Almost inhuman is this curving cascade of unadorned eloquence, falling upon the silent strand of listeners, without a break and without a pause, poignantly isolated, seeking no sustenance of sympathy, and fearing no repugnance of antagonism. Other orators appeal for replying applause, but he disdains appeal as coldly as he disdains

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defiance. He is enough for himself, and his power is a pitiless solitude. His primacy is painful, for not one man behind him or beside him or before him contests his iron dominion. His hard virility makes the tense, attentive faces around him look like uneasy shadows. The most vivid personalities grow pale and vague before his arrogant imperiousness. The cowed Opposition visibly shrivels away as he plunges a phrase like a dagger into its heart. The fight is unequal, and in vain his sword searches for a blade to bite or a shield to dint. Contempt grows on his tongue as he feels the line of adversaries falling back out of range. Now and then a ragged volley of interruption spurts forth, and he bites it into silence. The terrible swordsman is playing with his victims now, and as he flicks their flesh daintily, an acid smile hovers on his lips and a chill gleam of derision lights his wary eye. He presses hard on their flying disorder, pins them in a corner, and then with a mocking flourish leaves them gasping. His followers look on half afraid to cheer and half afraid to hold their silence. Now and then he wheels round and looks at his soldiery with a glance of haughty generalship, menacingly confident, sternly self-reliant. He is a leader who compels fear as well as faith, obedience as well as fidelity, respect as well as a kind of awed affection.

No man ever cultivated his defects more vehemently. "Max" has caricatured him in the

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act of "acquiring personal magnetism," but Mr. Asquith would rather die than be other than he is. He is a leader whom the led must take or leave. He will not hatch himself over again and hatch himself different. He scorns the arts of ingratiation and opportunism. "I am I," he seems to say, and he coldly declines to alter or alleviate his frigid temperament. What he is he is, and others must conform to him, not he to them. He will neither bend nor break. He will not be cajoled or coerced. There is no suppleness in his rigid spine. There he stands like a grey rock, the antithesis of his party, with its wild poetry of sentiment and sympathy, its quixotries of idealism, its gallant chivalry of adventure, its love of forlorn hopes, its loyalty to lost causes, its fine frenzy of pity for the weak and the poor and the oppressed. His Liberalism is governed by pure reason. He chains up his feelings as if they were wild beasts. He habitually feels more than he says, and he habitually says less than he feels.

But there is passion under his ice and fire beneath his iron ; and at times his austere loneliness is touched with a faint wistfulness and his storm-beaten isolation with an unwilling tenderness. For this hard, cold intellect is simple, and whatever is simple is sincere. The secret of Asquith is that he is a shy, proud Englishman, moulded by Balliol and the Bar. His shyness is

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a kind of pride. He is armoured with reserve and cased with reticence. He under-states and under-acts because he believes that the fear of gush is the beginning of wisdom. He would rather repel than rhapsodize. For him truth is a form of good form.

## A STUDY IN VELVET

**P**LACE : Queen's Hall Time : 8 p.m. The building is packed. The floor is snowy with white shoulders and white shirts gleaming together. Round the balcony are battle-cries : " We fight to win " ; " On our record we stand." There is no fiscal motto, but the name of Chamberlain is hung up beside the names of Balfour and Lansdowne, Beaconsfield and Salisbury. The platform is crowded with a motley gathering, ranging from Lord Hugh Cecil to Mr. Fred Horner. Obscurely wedged among the congested nonentities on the right is Sir Edward Clarke, fierce-eyed, his stern lips grinding together like millstones.

Suddenly a tall, lithe, lean man glides into view. It is Mr. Balfour. There are heavy pouches under his dark eyes. Dark pouches. They make the eyes sombrely mournful and delicately sad. I think of Hamlet. Yes, Mr. Balfour is Hamlet. As he floats by like a shadow in a frock coat, I long to see him in doublet and hose, talking to the skull of Yorick instead of to Sir Edward Clarke. He has the Hamlet temperament, the subtle mind playing in the subtle face, intellect shifting in features that



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are carved into a tenuous preciousness of contour. The contrast between the visage of Sir Edward Clarke and the visage of Mr. Balfour is violent : it is the lily and the lion, the rapier and the rock.

The cheers light his face with a boyish smile that shows the white teeth under the silken moustache. Hamlet becomes Prince Charming. I long to see him in pantomime. How exquisitely he would kiss the sleeping beauty ! Stay, he is Romeo and Paolo, Pelleas and Tristan, Launcelot and Lohengrin. A romantic hero ! He ought to wear armour and live in perpetual limelight. He is too fragile, too fine, too sweetly nice for the platform. Lord Randolph Churchill called him Postlethwaite. He is Postlethwaite. Even this polite mob shocks his fastidious senses. He ought to live under a rose-hung pergola, singing songs to his guitar. Darnley, Rizzio, and Chastelard—why does Mr. Balfour's face fill my mind with images of romantic phantoms and ineffectual angels ? He is a grizzled Rossetti lover, a weary Burne-Jones knight, a fatigued figure in a Morris tapestry.

Slowly he uncoils his long legs, and we yield to his languid glamour. While he speaks, my thoughts roam in the Italian Renaissance among the Medicis and the Borgias. Is this man modern ? Is he a twentieth-century reincarnation of some suave and supple Florentine ? The infinitely crafty face is moulded and modelled into bland, polished

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surfaces and fluently blended curves. The whole man is sinuous. His brindled hair is pomaded sleekly down to the nape of the neck in waves that end in rippling undulations. His face is oval, and the line of the jaw from ear to chin is a flowing swerve. The chin is daintily rounded, and the slender, tapering fingers love to fondle its shaven surface. The forehead is broad and slopes slightly back into the thinned hair parted neatly in the middle. The ear is very small, very graceful, very delicate. The nose is sensitively meagre, neurotically sharp and thin, almost shrewish in its acridly keen outline. The skin is a clear olive, a warm glow of colour under its fine texture. The head is small, feminine in its shape and size, but the broad forehead redeems the effeminacy of the lower part of the face. It is an intellectual head, with pensive imagination in the meditative eyes, gently tinged with faint, elusive scorn and reticent derision. Amiable mockery is the dominant expression. Analytic in temper, the man sucks amusement from the human comedy. He is Harlequin to himself, finding humour in his own emotions and farce in his own beliefs. Politics he deems a crude game, but it is the subtlest game that is played on the card-table of the world, and it serves.

Naturally indolent, he holds himself up by grasping the lapels of his frock coat. Though intensely

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self-conscious, he is no dandy, and looks old-fashioned in his low-cut Shakespeare collar and prim, clerical black tie. His gestures are casual and irrelevant, being mainly contrivances for the arrangement of his hands. They seldom hammer home a point, though now and then he rubs in a sneer with a scratching finger on cheek or chin, and stands like an expectant comedian waiting for an overdue laugh.

He is fond of the actor's pose. His oratory is theatrical, studded with tricks of voice and eye. He has no fund of genuine passion. His wrath is rhetorical, factitious, fictitious. He is best in *piano* persiflage and meticulously modulated sarcasm. His bravura passages are forced. He is indignant with an effort, and you feel he could argue against his own arguments. He is literary in his phrasing, and polishes his periods in the air. His utterance is hesitant. He stammers fluently, picking and pecking at his words, refining his refinements, splitting his split hairs. He is fastidious in his gibes, gloating over his pinpricks of irony, but he is bored with his simulations of emotion. He sees the absurdity latent in his own opinions, and he can laugh at his friends as well as at his foes.

His foible is superiority to foibles. His affectations are those of the artist, the dilettante, the aristocrat. He prefers to avert his eyes from his

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audience, and he would like to play to a pit of sophists. He has a trick of rolling his eyes towards the roof before an epigram, though sometimes he picks a *mot* off his boots, at which he is fond of staring. His voice is good in the lower register, but often it soars into a sour falsetto, and in pursuit of anger it is apt to crack.

He never fully clenches his fist. He merely bends his long fingers back to the palm, and lays his long thumb gently along the forefinger. He is a half-clenched man. He hates to be downright, forthright, outright. He dotes upon ambiguity and casuistry. He delights in syllogisms and labyrinthine dialectical displays. He has a sure instinct of evasion and a deceptive air of candour. He can stoop to claptrap and fustian and empty rhetoric in order to stuff out the conventional oration. He waits artistically for applause and sips water during the cheers. He can be artfully naïve, and his injured innocence is admirable. He is a stickler for deportment and a purist in style. He has magnanimity and tolerance and he delivers himself like a man of this world. His perorations are artificial, involved, meandering, unimpassioned. He begins and ends very clumsily. His diction is good, though he says "idear" for idea. He lives in an atmosphere of genial condescension, and he regards enthusiasm as a vulgarity practised by Irishmen and Nonconformists.

## A STUDY IN HOMESPUN

“**W**HAT is Campbell-Bannerman like?”  
Let us go to the Albert Hall to-night and see for ourselves. One thing is certain—he is not like the portrait which hangs in the Illiberal mind—a fussy, feeble old fellow who is half-ogre, half-idiot, combining the knavery of the knave with the foolery of the fool, the malignity of Machiavelli with the silliness of Simple Simon, monster and nincompoop, bogy and buffoon, scourge and scarecrow.

Let us see the man with our own eyes, forgetting the eulogies of eulogists and the detraction of detractors. As he walks past his brand-new Cabinet Ministers a thunderstorm of cheers breaks over his grey head. He is neither elate nor aloof. Where are his horns and arrow-headed tail? Alack, he is neither a demigod nor a demidevil. As he stands up on the right of the British water-bottle he looks the incarnation of British homeliness. A homely body with a homely face, homely physique, homely voice, homely eyes, homely smile, homely gestures, homely manner, homely

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phrases—the acme and culmination of homeliness. “Home, Sweet Home” on its legs and talking with a Scotch accent.

The middle classes rule in England. They make and break our Governments. We are a middle-class republic disguised as a monarchy, just as France is a middle-class monarchy disguised as a republic. The bourgeoisie is the modern State. It is composed of men who oscillate between reform and reaction, between democracy and aristocracy. It is the pendulum of the social clock.

The secret of “C.-B.” is this. He is the middleman of the middle class. The Albert Hall is a middle-class congress. As I look from arena to balcony, from balcony to gallery, I find it hard to say where the middle class ends and the working class begins. They overlap. Every workman carries a frock coat in his tool-bag. His social ideal is middle-class respectability. The frock coat, the starched shirt, and the top hat are his ambitions. He is a homely dreamer who dreams of a homely home. That is why “C.-B.” pleases him.

The passions of the middle classes are not spectacular. They are homely passions. Superior beings sneer at them, just as they sneer at “C.-B.” But homeliness wears well. The frock coat is tougher than armour, the shirt front is stronger

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than a steel breastplate, and the top hat more invincible than a sword-proof casque.

Unheroically heroic is the middle-class temper. Chivalry is its business. It does fine things in a humdrum way. It is paradox disguised as platitude. Look at the man who has stricken with terror the legions of his enemies. He is elaborately unpicturesque. Where are the gestures of the victor who has marched through deserts of derision? Where are the self-conscious arts of the orator? Where is the pose of power? He has no gestures, no arts, no pose. He is all homespun homeliness. His personality is a scheme of neutral tints. No flamboyancy. No orchidaceousness. No braggadocio. No florid sentiment. No hysteria. Nothing but linsey-woolsey simplicity, drab integrity, grey honesty.

"C.-B." is the cartoonist's despair. How can you caricature a man who has no angles, no corners, no eccentricities? He eludes you. His good humour baffles you. His genial rotundity is unseizable. Mr. Chamberlain's lean and hungry physiognomy silhouettes itself against any background. "C.-B.'s" features are jovially averaged. They blend in jolly curves and convexes, converging into the homely smile that plays round the homely moustache. It is a peace-and-good-will Christmas face, void of malice, smallness, meanness. It is a neat face, compact, orderly arranged, the

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grey hair cropped close, the moustache sprucely trimmed: the face of a British man of business. The nose is fine, small, nervous, sensitive—a Celtic nose, hinting at hot temper and quick emotion. But the dominant features are the square, strong, sharp, outjutting brows, under which, like torches in a cave, glow far-sunken dark eyes, alive with unflickering fire that reveals the hidden passion and the veiled romance of the man behind. “C.-B.’s” photographs are all full-face, not in profile. That is why they fail to present the real “C.-B.,” whose side-face bristles with saliences of character. The forehead is trenchantly massive, suggesting the obstinate spirit that looks out of the humorous eyes. The nostrils are delicately carved, and the deep furrow, ploughed from nose to lip and lip to jaw, indicates the wilfulness under the amiable suavity of his features. His will is strong, but it acts through persuasion rather than aggression. It is the diplomatic will that concentrates on essentials and melts resistance in detail as the sun melts an iceberg. The profile of the head is long. “C.-B.” is long-headed, prudent, patient, imperturbable. He has staying power. He can wait. His calm fortitude is very British. He does not waste his nerves on futile violences. He is taciturn, knowing the virtue of silence. He abhors ostentation. He is not greatly moved by applause or execration. He can discount both. He is in-



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capable of rancour or venom. He is an optimist, apt to think well of the world. He is a lovable man, full of sentiment and sensibility. His good humour is inexhaustible. He has the Scottish gift of distinguishing between measures and men, between principles and partisans. His conscience is forthright. He sees straight to the heart of things, and is free from refinements and casuistries.

His balanced judgment is shown by the absence of abrupt contrasts in his features. He is slow in counsel. He likes time to deliberate. He is not easily hustled, and an awkward man to bully. He makes up his mind cautiously, and he changes it reluctantly. He delights in the golden mean and the golden rule. Moderation is his foible. He would be the Mirabeau of a revolution. He lacks pugnacity, and loves the quiet life. He is no demagogue. He could face a mob, but he could not lead one. He is no rhetorician. He does not simulate emotions. He loves an under-statement, and glories in conciliation. Hence his gift of generalship. He is unselfish, empty of envy, and has craft without craftiness. He disdains the wiles of popularity. His simple candour looks like naïveté, and his lack of artifice like artlessness. But his plain tale tells, and his veracity outlasts mendacity. His use of truth is direct. He wields it like Ithuriel's spear against the sophist.

"C.-B." is no cynic. He has simple faith in

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simple things and simple men. He knows right when he sees it, and when he sees it he cleaves to it in scorn of consequence. He cannot tack or trim, quibble or equivocate. He is proof against both bluff and blandishment, cajolery and coercion. He has mulishness in his good nature. Now and then his lower jaw is thrust out and his lower lip clenched over his upper lip, revealing a native resolution undauntable and immovable when provoked. He shines in adversity and fights best with his back to the wall. No tonguester, his oratory is character, seasoned with dry humour and racy phrase. His best speech is himself. He is the simple life of politics. He spells rest after delirium, repose after turmoil, peace after war, reality after sham, wisdom after waste, and stability after storm. He is a sedative and a tonic for a neurotic time.

## A NIGHT WITH BURNS

**W**HERE is the General Election ? That is the question which dwellers in the West End of London are asking. It is in the newspapers, but elsewhere it is invisible. London is so large that a General Election loses itself. How can I find it ? It is like hunting for a pin in the Sahara.

But I am determined to discover the General Election. I want to get nearer to it than the tape-machines. What mysterious force is driving those fussy little wheels that whizz and wheeze out white ribbons lettered with victory and disaster ? Let us track it down. Let us surprise the democracy that is making another new heaven and another new earth.

Where ? In Battersea. I step into the train at Victoria. Leaving behind the world of palaces and pleasure-houses, I alight at Battersea Park. The night is wild with rain and wind. There are no hansoms. But there are Council trams, and for a halfpenny I am carried swiftly to Latchmere Road. Thence through the deluge along dark streets, under railway bridges, to Clapham Junc.

tion. Everywhere are silent groups of men and women, huddling in doorways, against walls, under arches. They are waiting for the declaration of the poll. At the Town Hall a dumb multitude is standing patiently under the drumming downpour. Their silence is eloquently tense. It is rainproof. It is a disciplined crowd, its front ranks beautifully dressed by hundreds of policemen whose heavy leathern capes glisten moistly in the white electric glare. Acres of pale faces are turned towards the lighted windows behind which the votes are being counted. There is no horseplay, no rowdyism, no jostling, no disorder. Labour is a gentleman.

The spacious vestibule of the Town Hall, behind its well-guarded doors, buzzes with chatter like the Lobby at Westminster. There are journalists, election agents, committee men, canvassers with party rosettes in their coats. The rival candidates for Clapham are talking to each other genially. It is a far cry to Eatanswill. Horatio Fizkin does not shake his fist in the countenance of the Honourable Samuel Slumkey, nor does Mr. Slumkey defy Mr. Fizkin to mortal combat. All is cold decorum. The minutes limp by lamely. Nine o'clock. Ten o'clock. Outside the crowd grows and grows, despite the endless rods of rain. The round oes of faces waver like a sea of living cyphers, noughts of flesh drawn on the blackboard of night, surging to right and left like a diagram,

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blotting out the broad street, clogging the crawling trams, and fading in the opaque distance into a blur of humanity. Twenty thousand men and women, waiting, waiting, waiting in the rain. I begin to think I have discovered the General Election.

At last a short, square-shouldered man, with white ribbons flying from his buttonhole, dashes down the broad staircase, vanishes, reappears, and leaps lightly up the steps again, taking them three at a time with the springy agility of a deer. It is John Burns. His majority is over a thousand. The whispered rumour runs like wildfire through the lobby. The minutes crawl. What is that? A cheer upstairs. In a flash the lobbyful of waiting men rushes past the janitor, dashes up the staircase, bursts into the room where the votes have been counted, and struggles madly over the desks and benches towards the balcony, which is now crowded with mayor, town clerk, candidates, officials, local politicians, and pressmen. On an illuminated transparency the one word "Burns" is displayed, and as if a button had been pressed the silent crowd turns into artillery and thunders out a straight volley of iron sound. Its "attack" is instantaneous, without a ragged edge. This clear explosion, issuing from twenty thousand throats, does not die or dwindle. The sonorous note is held. It moves through a long, level space

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of time, neither waning nor waxing in volume. The pitch is high, but not shrill, and it does not flatten. It is perfectly fused, the ringing music of one vast voice made out of myriads. As it rushes past the ear-drum it seems to become a visible, ponderous, touchable thing, having colour and shape and breathing life, sweeping through the darkness. It is the soul of the crowd streaming in sound across the sky, charged with electric emotions, joy, pride, exultation, glory, ecstasy, triumph, defiance, hope, devotion, love, hate, and whatsoever moves the deep heart of man in the passion of victory. It is a song without words, the marching-song of democracy, the hymn of man, beside which poetry and music are pale stammerings.

The shout beats upon a worn, grey, pock-marked face whose eyes blaze with personal fire. Leaning out over the balcony John Burns faces the proletarian music. The blown flare of Roman candles picks out the hollows in his features and silhouettes his vehement profile against the dark stentorian masses below and beyond. Only a Rodin could carve the immobile speed of his poised head, its passionate angles cutting the air, every line alive with passion tenser than the cheering passion at his feet. The wind tosses his thinning grey locks, as he vainly strives to still the storm of voices.

Let me try to hew out a rude portrait before

the acclamations let go their grip. The head is grandly built, the forehead daringly valiant in its forward thrust; the rough, curved black eyebrows are smudged with grey, and the fierce, incisive grey moustache and beard are smudged with black. The masculine power of the man is seen in the shaggy hair covering throat and cheek and chin up to the delicate line of the vividly scarlet lower lip. He is an Esau. The dark, poignant eyes flame in deep, sombre sockets. The nose is vigorously broad yet nervously sensitive, the nostrils finely attenuated and alert. Deep chest, heavy shoulders, powerful hands. The body symmetrical, elastic, graceful, eagerly fluent in its posture, every limb and muscle playing athletically under the neat blue serge. Quick on his feet as a pugilist, he looks courage incarnate, audacious flesh drained clean of corrupting passions, violently ascetic, glowingly austere.

“O-r-der-r!” The hoarsely resonant voice cuts through the cheers like a sword. “Silence!” He speaks; the crowd hangs on his lips. His words ring out like iron bells, old battles colouring their clang, crying the worn cry of a worn man whose soul is still boyishly adventurous. Then he darts back, dashes down the stairs, and flings himself into the arms of Battersea. Two of the old guard, “Soldier Collins” and a bricklayer, pounce upon him like tigers. They have carried

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him through ten victories. The line of police parts. He is submerged in the crowd for a second ; then he is hoisted on their shoulders and swept tumultuously away like a cork tossed upon a raging sea. Riding the human billows like a sea-gull, he vanishes down the Latchmere Road.

As the crowd rolls after him, I sigh a deep sigh of content. I have discovered the General Election.



## WILL CROOKS

**T**HE big hand of the clock above the tall gates of Woolwich Arsenal is moving towards one. That big hand controls the lives of sixteen thousand men. It is the very fate of Woolwich. As I stand in Beresford Square watching it creeping from minute to minute, I see the families in a thousand mean houses in a hundred mean streets. They revolve with its revolutions. On one side of the clock the women and children : on the other side the men. It is the clock of toil. I wish our poets would cease troping tropes about the sun and the moon, and sing the romance of the industrial clock that measures out life and death to the people, dividing their nights and their days, their sleep and their labour, their joys and their sorrows. Its inexorable visage is a silent symbol of the social fate that blesses and blights with vast impersonal impartiality. Doom crawls on its dial. It registers the decrees of the tyranny behind all the tyrannies, the tyranny of economic law.

The piston-thrust of the General Election is audible in Beresford Square. Here the shams

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and shibboleths of politics turn into grim realities. Men are fighting for life. Clothes for the back, boots for the feet, bread for the belly—that is the politics of Woolwich. This bare square is a labour parade-ground. Life here is food. Round the square are eating-shops and stalls. The army of labour marches on its belly.

Against the kerbstone on one side of the square a van is drawn up. It is Will Crooks's platform, the labour general's war-wagon. His lieutenants are waiting for him, Mrs. Crooks at their head. No general could have a better aide-de-camp. Buxom, clear-eyed, alert, she looks every inch a workwoman, incisive vigour shining in her strong, kindly, homely face. She is dressed with simple propriety: plain black hat, brightened with pale blue ribbon; plain black coat and skirt; her capable hands grasp a plain black bag. No jewellery save her wedding ring and its "keeper." A splendid woman, she incarnates the English home. Behind her I see the women of England, the host of humble washers, bakers, menders, the heroines of obscure rescues, the Grace Darlings of poverty.

It is one o'clock. The Arsenal vomits the lava of labour. The wives meet the husbands. They have brought the food to the gates so that the men may spend the dinner hour round the van in the square. A huge multitude rolls forward and eats

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while it waits. There is a shout, "Here he is!" Cheers. Then, like a Jack-in-the-Box, a fierce, dark, rugged face is shot up above the capped heads. It is Will Crooks.

He is like a shaggy Highland bull. He has a bull-head, bull-shoulders, bull-chest, bull-body. A square rock of a man, with no jelly in him. Planted firmly on his feet, he seems rooted in Woolwich as immovably as the Arsenal, the very mould and model of a labour leader. There is that behind his piercing eyes which compels respect, the energy of will working in a simple mind.

A stormy face, weather-worn, scarred with battle. Between the black, bristling, bushy eyebrows are two deep, vertical trenches. Dug across the broad, massive brow scowl row on row of wrinkles. There are crow's feet round the humorous, vigilant eyes, and two furrows plunge downward from the precipitous nose, which is very strong and stern. The swarthy skin gleams in its frame of violent black hair and moustache and greying beard. The head is large, heavy, almost sullen. It is furiously vehement in its gestures, aggressively combative even in immobility. The large-lobed ear is resolute in every curve of its powerful modelling. The short, hirsute neck is pugnacious. The angular shoulders are jammed like rocks upon the deep chest. The big,

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punishing hands are solidly masculine, the fingers broad to the nails. The man is all male strength. His physique is coarsely stalwart, all compression and concentration, as if he had been forged in an iron-foundry, tempered in a furnace, beaten together with steam-hammers, and riveted into a stockish virility.

His clothes are decent black, roughly neat. His linen is spotless, the shirt-cuffs fastened with plain links. Shakespeare collar, blue knotted tie, sprinkled with white horseshoes. The soft black felt hat sits easily on the head. The whole man is one piece of masculine symmetry taken straight out of the people, a rough lump of democracy. He is London to the marrow. His harsh voice is London articulate. It is a bus-driver, cabby, costermonger voice. It is the pavement crying aloud. It is brutally direct, rudely explosive. It detonates. It rips and tears. It drops like bricks. It bellows, thunders, growls. It comes through a speech without an aitch, and the vowels are a pure cockney brogue. I like all brogues. But the ripe, fruity cockney brogue is the most delectable of them all.

Mr. Crooks is a cockney humorist. He fills Beresford Square with laughter. His humour is broad, shrewd, genial. He is a born mimic. Hear him parodying the accent of the 'Randlord'. (" 'Shun ! De Union Shack is de most budivul

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gommershall asshet in de world. God shave de King!’”) He revels in mellow irony. He chaffs the Unionist candidate with boisterous ridicule. He does not take “The Major” seriously. The Major’s name is William Augustus Adams. He has nicknamed him “Bill Adams.”

Will is as ready in retort as a busman. He stops in the middle of his speech and points to an empty hearse passing on the fringe of the meeting. The crowd looks round. Will puts both hands up to his mouth and halloos to the driver: “Hi! You’ll find him up there! Bury him decently, will yer?” The crowd smiles one vast smile, guffaws one great guffaw.

Will’s pet targets are “Randlords” and Army contractors. He keeps the square roaring with tales of jampots weighing twelve ounces to the pound; of remounts called chargers—“the only charger was the man who got the money for ’em”; of invalid wine brought back to be auctioned—“Tommy ‘done’ in South Africa, and somebody making a red nose at home”; of 100 miles—“thirty-one lost, sixty-nine never found, but all paid for.”

Mr. Crooks loves to heckle the heckler. His wit flashes like lightning. Glasses on nose, he reads question after question, answering each with brilliant brevity. “Favour of Women’s Suffrage?” “Yus!” “Will a tax on ground values raise

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house-rent ? ” “ We'll watch it don't ! ” “ Favour of married schoolmistresses ? ” “ Wouldn't ye rather have a decent married women to look after your kids than a silly girl ? ” Thus, with homely humour, Will Crooks woos Woolwich. The hand of the clock points to ten minutes to two. The clang of a bell is heard. Will stops short and sharp. There is a cheer, and like magic the whole crowd rushes through the gates.

## OUR LADY POVERTY

**I**T is high noon at Hungerford Bridge. The cold winter sunlight is cutting diamonds out of the Thames. The ancient river on his way to the sea passes a new river, a river of hunger, a Thames of famished flesh. It rises not in far sunny meadows, but out of the black depths of the city of a hundred sorrows. Its main stream comes from the Pit of Poplar and the Gehenna of West Ham and the Tophet of Walthamstow. Wells of want gush up under the white palaces of Mayfair and Belgravia. There are dark subterranean springs bubbling out of Shoreditch and Bethnal Green. These women are the poor grey parishioners of poor grey parishes whose very names are a sigh and a moan upon the map of London.

“Symbols and metaphors!” you say. But they are alive. Six thousand living women with living children in their arms crawl out of the very pavement into the sun that shines on your Parliament spires and your Abbey’s towers, and, crawling, they stain your glory and soil your pride.

Still they come, blinking in the light, these

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captives, escaping from earless and eyeless dungeons of Poverty, whose walls are more durable than stone and stronger than iron, being quarried out of wrong and mortared with injustice. Six thousand prisoners of hope! They have heard the King's word of solace and they come to cast their misery at the feet of the Prime Minister. They are small folk. They have faith in the great. Surely the miracle will be wrought. The Prime Minister will pity their desolation. He will take a pen and write. There will be work, golden work, for their men. They and their little ones will know cold and hunger no more. There will be bread, magical bread, in the mouths of their boys and girls. Ah! their anguish is well-nigh over. Their woe is all but ended. Smiles dance in the creases and furrows of their faces. Laughter ripples over their bloodless lips. Exodus at last!

Four-deep are these miserables. Their rusty ranks creep like a centipede of sorrow through the wind-swept mud. They carry rude white banners like brandished shrouds bearing black legends. "Bread for our Children!" "Work for our Men!" The column of women and children is selvedged on each side with workmen. They stare at the packed faces. They say nothing. They dumbly gaze. The women gaze dumbly back. It is the quiet look of dull despair. It is the calm eye of poverty. As we walk along the narrow lane



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between the women and the workmen, the eye of want watches us. There are twelve thousand eyes here, eyes of babes, eyes of children, eyes of girls, eyes of mothers, eyes of grandmothers. But all these eyes are one vast eye, and all these souls one vast soul. It is life looking at life. The mystical unity of life surges over every barrier. We feel that the thing behind their eyes is the thing behind ours. This is more than brotherhood. It is identity.

We turn from Life's Eye to Life's Flesh. Thridding again our alley of anguish, we survey its frieze of faces. Famine is a great sculptor. He has carved each of these countenances with a separate agony. It is his winter exhibition. Six thousand statues of starvation ! Are there so many nuances of pain ? Has grief so many moods ? These ruddled and raddled visages have been harrowed by privation and ploughed by distress. Haglike old women, chapfallen, loose-lipped, rheumy, their knuckles gnarled, their hair grey, their backs bent. Stunted girls, their locks screwed into long spills and rolls from ear to temple, their skin sucked sallow, their bosoms crushed flat, their gapped teeth crumbling in black and yellow decay. No savages are more horribly defeatured and defaced than some of these Englishwomen, stealthily mutilated by economic laws that are crueller than any steel.

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Sad is the starving man, and sad the starving woman, but sadder than these is the starving child. There are hundreds of anæmic infants in this pilgrimage of poverty, shrivelled babes sleeping wanly in weary arms, their thin shanks dangling, and in their blue lips what the ironic poor call a "comforter." Round them the crowd roars, the trains thunder, the hansoms jangle, the motor horns are blown, the horses prance. But the children sleep. They are too weak and weary to keep awake at noon. More dreadful than the open eyes of the mother and the father are the closed eyes of the child. Yet these men and women were once babes, and these babes will one day be even as they, for in the land of Poverty generation after generation lives and dies a living death.

Slowly the women march behind a band of boys playing merry music, their brass instruments shining in the sun. Shambling along Northumberland Avenue they go, skirting Trafalgar Square and winding down Whitehall. It is a lame and lugubrious dance of death.

As the files of famine press forward, murmurs are heard among the spectators. "Shocking!" . . . "Damned shame!" Three cartloads of puny children rattle by. We think of the tumbrils and the French Revolution. Those are our tumbrils. They carry our children to the guillotine of hunger. Our Lady Poverty is pitiless. The

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phantoms shuffle on, their white flags flogged by the wintry wind. Their garments are brutally grotesque. Battered straw hats, black turning white, white turning black. Dingy crape bonnets, jettied and bugled: grimy broken feathers, dusty faded flowers, plush capes and mantles green with age, shawls, men's overcoats on women, tattered skirts dabbling in the mud: lamentable feet, blobs of flapping leather, caked and crusted with mire. It is the obscenity of civilization. Let Our Lady Poverty move past in her silence and her sadness and her despair.

## IN WEST HAM

**I**N the West End the east wind is blowing bitterly. Let us go to its birthplace. Tube to the Bank. Thence to Fenchurch Street. There we take a third-class ticket to Canning Town. The wooden seats in our "smoker" are greasy with grime, and the floor is strewn with sawdust. From the window we watch a dreary procession of dingy streets. The houses are "brick boxes with slate lids." Their back yards flutter with domestic bunting, melancholy flags of drying clothes. We spell out the despairing signal of poverty: "The East expects the West to do its duty." We glide by a congested graveyard, its huddled headstones gleaming greyly through the October fog. Then our train pierces some desolate flats, where the scrofulous grass seems to pray for the spade. We get out. We walk to Hermit Park. There we see a bandstand in a green, dismal desert. Round the bandstand there is a silent crowd of shivering men.

As we approach they eye us doubtfully. "More splits," one of them mutters. There are police hovering on the fringe of the crowd. A caped inspector stares at us with an ironical smile. We

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are chilled by the tragic silence that washes round the bandstand. We shrink from these haggard faces and hungry glances. We feel ashamed of our warm clothes, of our cigarette, of our last meal, of our boots, of our watch and chain. The money in our pocket burns us. Our gloves are an outrage. The sullen dejection of these slouching men stabs us like a sword. There are a hundred sorts of misery. Old misery. Middle-aged misery. Young misery. Misery with a grey beard. Weak misery. Strong misery. The raiment of these derelicts is like a walking rag-store.

A man climbs on the bandstand. He has a square, resolute face. His worn clothes are shabbily clean. He nervously grips the rail, and lards the police with praise. They must help the good police. "No rioting. No pillaging. Be orderly."

As he ends, we wait for the cheers. There are no cheers. The crowd is silent. These men have lost all heart and hope. The smiling inspector has taken a shorthand note of the speech. He closes his book and glances sardonically at us. The crowd closes round us. We are buried in the unemployed. They suffocate us. The ring of faces is like a circle in Dante's *Inferno*. These sad, mutilated shadows, "tormented phantoms, ancient injured shades," shut out the earth, the air, and the sky.

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Dazed and bewildered, we tear ourselves out of this Malebolge of want. We walk in a stupefaction of despair through the dolorous streets of Canning Town. As we walk our guide lifts the lid of hell, and shows us its horrors. Yesterday two P. & O. boats came in. Out of 2000 men waiting for a job, only 150 were needed. Eleven weeks ago the first register of the unemployed showed 915 workless men. On these men depended over 400 wives and 1060 children.

We investigate the case of the orator. He is 32. Born in Durham, he has lived here since 1879. He served 8 years 306 days in the Army. He produces his discharge. His regimental number is 91,610, 124th Field Battery, Royal Field Artillery. He went through the siege of Ladysmith, got enteric, and was invalided out of the service. He had a pension of 1s. 6d. a day for a year, then 8d. a day for the second year, then a pair of spectacles for his injured sight. Since that—nothing. He produces letters peremptorily declining to do more for him. He has not yet received the war medal to which he is entitled. He holds an excellent testimonial from his lieutenant. According to it he can “ride and drive.” Up to March last he worked as a plater’s labourer on the *Black Prince*. He was discharged owing to slackness of work. Until July he picked up odd jobs as bricklayer’s labourer. He has two children.

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In August his wife was confined. He then got tickets for meat (1s. 6d.), milk (1s. 6d.), and grocery (2s. 6d.). He has had only three and a half days' work in three months. He has been selling his furniture—overmantel 7s. (cost 24s.), clock 2s. (cost 8s. 6d.), shade of birds 2s., chair 6d., and so on. He owes £3 for rent of two rooms at 4s. a week. He has been in workhouse for two days.

Has he tried for work? Yes, he has been "through the hoop." He has got up like the others at 3 a.m. and walked to Tilbury in search of a job. Here is his itinerary for one day: 6.30 a.m. At Victoria Dock gates. Attended the 7, 8, and 9 o'clock calls. No work. Came home, "signed off to mother." 10—"Adverts." Walked seven miles to Seven Kings, the other side of Ilford. Tried several buildings. No work. Walked round by Romford Road and Stratford. No work. 11 p.m.—Got home. No food all day. "I'm getting too shabby." Their last good meal cost 3d. Here is the menu: Two cold faggots 1½d., potatoes 1d., onions ½d. What is a faggot? He seems surprised at our ignorance. "It's a Savoury Duck." What is a "Savoury Duck"? "A faggot." You can buy a hot faggot for 1d., a cold faggot for ¾d. Boiled with potatoes and onions it makes "Savoury Duck Soup."

We walk through the dusk to his home. His

room is tiny, but clean. His wife is a comely lass of twenty-two. The eldest boy is a fair-haired little fellow of three. There is no squalor. It is a cosy nest with a faded air of decency. But bit by bit it is breaking up. When the landlord's patience is exhausted, what will happen? Here, then, is a test case. A man who starved for his country in Ladysmith should not be allowed to starve in London.

His plight is better than that of hundreds. There are families who have burnt or sold all their furniture. We hear of one case where six children are sleeping on the bare floor. The people help each other. Women are eager to wash heavy articles at 6*d.* a dozen. Children pick the cinders off new cinder paths. The suffering of the young is piteous. At fourteen the boys leave school and turn into hooligans. At night under the railway arches you can see hundreds of people sleeping out, most of them destitute lads. There are all sorts of queer trades in this land of hunger. Some women earn coppers as "Jew's pokers." For 2*d.* they light fires on the Jewish Sabbath. Ghouls prowl over the battle-field. They rob the wounded. We are shown a bogus 6*d.* raffle ticket which is being sold in the streets "for the benefit of the family of an unemployed man."

West Ham reviles the new Act. It regards it as a fraud. West Ham also loathes the workhouse.



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The women prefer to starve rather than let their husbands enter it, for it is the death knell of home and the black badge of shame. No landlord will let rooms to the man whose last reference is "Bill Bailey," the nickname of a certain deputy labour-master.

What of the future ? Will these starving men go on meekly starving through the winter ? Their patience is almost invincible. But it may snap. The other night there were 100 police from fourteen London divisions at a meeting of 1000 workless men. But what can be done ? That is the aching riddle. We turn our back on the anguish and the agony. We get into the train. We feel the sharp pang of pity growing dull. In a few hours we shall forget. Life is very implacable. As we pass the grey headstones in the silent cemetery, we think of Death. His hospitable house is open even to the Unemployed.

## PETTICOAT LANE

“**P**ETTICOAT Lane?” says the policeman at the Bank. “Take a Shoreditch bus.” “Petticoat Lane?” says the conductor. “Get off at Dirty Dick’s.” Who is Dirty Dick? We wonder. We want to know, but we are ashamed to ask. Perhaps it is some famous hostelry, a London landmark like the Angel and the Elephant. Yes, there it is, its shameless name staring from its brazen front. “Dirty Dick’s!” The fellow is proud of his appellation. He glories in it. He has peppered his house with DD. He is as impenitent as the French king who peppered the Louvre with D’s in honour of Diane de Poitiers, his mistress.

Well, let us not be hard on Dirty Dick. He must live up to the Lane, where dirt is next to godliness. The dregs and heeltaps of London are pouring into it this bright Sunday morning, and as we are gulped down by its roaring gullet the first thing that startles us is a shop-window stacked with Passover Cakes, a granddaughter of Miriam sitting placidly at the door.

Unlike Dirty Dick, Petticoat Lane is ashamed of

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itself. It disguises itself as Middlesex Street, a miserable name, a name that sticks in ear and throat. Out on it! Petticoat Lane is a true coinage of the people. It has the right smack of vernacular romance.

Along the kerbs in two parallel lines are long rows of stalls. The sidewalks and the roadway are packed with lounging promenaders, mostly malodorous. The Lane has a pungent smell. Its fragrance lingers in the nostrils. Like the scents of Houbigant, the perfume of Petticoat Lane is made of many ingredients.

High above the turbid torrent of greasy caps grins the violent face of a Jew. He is perched on a stall. His curved beak swings through the air like a scythe. His vast mouth is horribly dilated. His features are distorted by the noise of barter. His eyes bulge in an agony of trade. There you see the secret of the Jew—intensity. This hawker is in Petticoat Lane to-day, but he may be in Park Lane to-morrow. To-day he is selling old clo': to-morrow he may be selling old empires.

In the Lane the Jew barter and the Gentile buys. These wonderful people traffic in our absurd desires. Their wares are a minute satire on our wants. They sell us gewgaws as if we were savages. They exploit our stupidity.

At this swirling corner we can study types of the two races. A dandified Jew is suavely selling

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gimcrack jewellery for shillings. Behind him in the mire a Lancashire acrobat is bursting blood-vessels for ha'pence. The one makes money with his wits, the other with his muscles. I fear the brain of the Jew beats the brawn of the Gentile.

There is another type who relies on noise. He is selling old leather with a muscular fury that carves his face into a gargoyle of sound. He foams at the mouth. He lards his eloquence with saliva. His voice rips and tears the rival din around it. Never have I heard speech so strident, so raucous, so brazen. The man is a demon of discord, with lungs of iron and throat of steel. On his right hand he wears a leathern glove. With a huge bar he belabours old engine-belts, fire-hose, saddlery. While he thumps he yells. With a murderous knife he hacks off sixpenn'orths, scrapes the surface, and sells them to the amateur cobbler. "Let your eyes be your guide," he howls, "and your money the last thing you part with." Another noisy trafficker is selling coats and vests. He chants a chorus as he puts on a jacket. "Down where the red poppies blo-o-w." Then he shrieks: "Six guineas! Six guineas! . . . Six bob! Come off a lord—the Lord knows who." He puts on a serge reefer: "In-di-go blue! Navy blue! Bluey blue till you can't blue any more! Come off a drowned sea-captain."

Flying from this ear-splitting humorist, we

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stumble over a young gentleman who is trying on boots. Hard by, a seedy old man is being measured for trousers, while his son, a jolly blue-jacket, looks on with a grin.

In the crowd there are men of all nations—Turks, Lascar seamen, Chinamen, Japanese, Hindus. These Orientals put the Cockney to shame. Their clear skins and glossy beards reprove his pimpled stubble.

An old blind Jew is playing tunes on his skinny hands. His face is sallow parchment stretched on bones. His mouth is a round O. His grey beard floats on the breeze. Hollowing his lean hands, he claps them together, and produces a strange manual music. The contrast between his rabbinical face and the cockney airs he beats out of his palms is fantastic. It is the East mimicking the West, Abraham mocking Kipling.

The Lane likes medicine. It has its waters as well as Marienbad. Strong men drink Dutch Drops and eat Dutch Eels. "Queeneenanops," an amber beverage, is very popular. It cures "inward weakness, tendencies to faint, weight and pressure over the eyes, dimness of sight, slightest flurry, the body oppressed and the mind confused, all nervous prostrations, cuts, burns, and old-standing wounds."

A Jewish fish-merchant wears a leather apron. He is like a dingy merman, enamelled from head

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to foot with shining scales. Old women are skewering cat's meat. Old men are whittling horseradish. Jolly fellows are carving tricoloured bars of ice cream. You lick it off the paper as you loaf along. A dexterous youth is selling gyroscopes. There is a bird-fancier selling canaries. In a lofty cage there is a monkey that glares and jabbars horribly. It is the familiar of the fair, the succubus of the Lane.

A nigger is cleaning a boy's teeth with his finger. He explains that his powder would make the teeth whiter if he had a "toot-brush." Polish Jews, garlanded with boots, are crying "Ze more you loke, ze more you vand." Stalls festooned with coats and trousers rise up like gallows, hundreds of flabby arms and legs wagging in the wind. We are stunned with the cries of Mendozas and Assenheims, Rubinsteins and Levys, Elbozes and Valentines. We are hashed in a hash of languages, stewed in a stew of tongues. Our eyes are worn with gazing at collars, fronts, socks, studs, boots, carpet slippers, toys, cycle horns, locks, keys, trowels, brushes, wheelks, "dying pigs," ocarinas, alarm clocks, revolving rubber heels, albums, penny cameras, goldbeater's skin, violins, crockery, opera glasses, French transparencies, songs, old boots and old books, hats, remnants, handkerchiefs, ribbons, bead necklaces, furs that mew and bark, banjos, dulcimers, knives, forks, files, spoons,

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saws, chisels, jockey-scales—all the fads of our civilized folly.

It is one o'clock. The thud of the beer-engine is heard in the taverns and Miriam is still selling Passover Cakes.

## A PENNY FAIR

“CHRISTMAS, Father . . . OO Fairyland.”  
“Double oh, Fairyland.” There is a long silence. “Are you there ?”

A loud laugh bursts out of the receiver. “Ha ! Ha ! Ha !” I never heard such a laugh. It is a round, crimson, roast beef, plum pudding, mince pie, port wine, snapdragon laugh. There are holly leaves and mistletoe berries and fir-trees in it, cotton wool and icing sugar, raisins and almonds, walnuts and crackers, frost and snow, carols and church bells, bugles and children’s squeaking voices. I cannot tell you how many other wonderful things there are in it. There are the shining eyes of mothers bending over cots, and the sleepy eyes of little boys and girls, and the twinkling eyes of bald old uncles, and the soft eyes of rosy old aunts, and the winking eyes of fathers that pretend to be very solemn and proper and indifferent and calm.

The whole world seems to be in this wonderful laugh.

“Who the Dickens are you ?”



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"I'm Father Christmas, and Dickens is staying with me." At that I hear another laugh like the sound of a shower of new sixpences.

"I thought Dickens was dead."

"Ho, Ho, Ho! Dickens dead! That is a good joke. Why, he always spends me with me."

"Spends you? What do you mean?"

"Why, Christmas, you silly old buffer!"

"A-o-oh! Is that a joke? And I'm not silly, or old, or a buffer."

"Well, you ask silly old questions."

"I say, Father Christmas, how do you feel this—um—this you?"

"That's better, young 'un. I never felt better in my life."

"Aren't you played out?"

"Bless my soul! haven't I got millions of children?"

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Well, you see I'm made of children."

"Go on! How on earth . . . ?"

"And children are made of me. Ha, Ha!"

"But you are awfully old, you know. You've got a long white beard"

"Oh, that's only a disguise. I'm young inside. I have got all the children in my heart."

"It must be a big heart."

"You're right, my boy. It's the biggest heart in the world."

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"Room for me in it?"

"Can you laugh?"

"Yes."

"Can you cry?"

"Yes."

"Do you believe in indiscriminate charity?"

"Yes."

"Then come in and warm yourself." And the old fellow went off into a perfect convulsion of guffaws.

"Are you busy to-day?"

"Of course, I'm busy. Don't you know I have got millions of stockings to stuff."

"Can you spare half an hour?"

"Perhaps. What do you want?"

"May I walk up Ludgate Hill with you to see your Penny Fair?"

"All right. Meet me under the railway bridge."

Sure enough, I see Father Christmas sitting in a big motor-car under the bridge. His beard is longer than General Booth's. He shakes hands with me and begins to laugh. The policeman laughs, too, the bus-drivers laugh, the cabmen laugh. Everybody laughs. The laughter runs up Fleet Street to the Strand. Old St. Paul's fat old dome begins to laugh, too, and before we know he is dancing a cake-walk up and down the hill. The Mansion House joins him, and the old couple waltz along Cheapside, where Bow Bells begin to

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peal Noel, Noel. The old city churches shake their belfries as if they were wearing a cap and bells. Drowsy old Father Thames hears the noise, and with a jolly chuckle he jumps right over the Monument.

"Come along," says Father Christmas, "and see my Penny Fair." He takes my hand and we push through the laughing crowd on the sidewalk. In the gutter on each side are hundreds of gutter merchants with trays of toys. Old men, old women, young men, young women, little boys and little girls, all selling penny toys.

"My servants," chuckles the old chap, with a wave of his fat red hand.

"They're very poor servants."

"That's why I engage them. I like them poor. The poorer the better. What's the good of being rich if you have no poor to give your money to? Why, my boy, I just live on the poor. No poor, no Christmas." With that he digs me in the ribs, and begins laughing again.

We push along the line of hawkers right up to St. Paul's. There the old fellow stands chuckling. He points down the Hill at the double river of toys.

"All my work," he grunts.

"Your work! Why, they're made in Houndsditch."

"Fiddlesticks! I invents 'em, I makes 'em, I sells 'em, I buys 'em, I gives 'em away, and I

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breaks 'em. Ho, Ho, Ho!" With that he turns round, and takes off the Dome of St. Paul's.

"Paul," he says, "lend us your hat." He turns the Dome upside down, and he begins to fill it with penny toys.

"All made to die," says a greasy old man with a tray of dying pigs and roosters. "All made to die."

Bill Bailey's uncle, a double-jointed Zulu; Japanese drums; the bull and the bear hammering each other; *animaux assortis*; Asia paper; living pictures; motor-buses, motor-cars, motor-boats; Scotch expresses; sewing machines; bicycles; musical turbines and musical cigars; clocks in glass cases; gold watches; lamps; suites of furniture; a Japanese farmyard in a box; dwarf fir-trees; dancers, horses, and flower-pots made of paper; the smallest purse in the world; fighting cocks; photo frames; brooches, "any name you like"; boy feeding a dog; thumbnail saucepans, chairs, teapots, candlesticks, coal-scuttles, cameras, prams—caricaturing the knick-nacks of the "silver table"; nutcrackers; "loidy-birds"; trick bunches of "voyolets": bone studs; comb and mirror; jumping and squeaking frogs; Lilliputian skittles; three brown jugs; scales; an india-rubber face that puts its tongue out; wriggling snakes; china babies in a walnut; brush and crumb trays; a big elephant

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and three elephantlets—"the happy family"; magnetic teetotums; crowing cocks; cribbage pegs; masks and puppets, whose tongues and arms blow out; mouth organs; "three china bybies with gowlden 'air"; creeping blackbeetles, crocodiles, swallows, mice—"all over the carpet"; jack-in-the-boxes; acrobats; flags; plates; biscuit-tins; knives and forks; fans; drawing-books; expanding glass bracelets; the eating monkey; the jumping monkey; the climbing monkey; dachshunds with nodding head; puzzle corks; revolving balls. All these and millions more Father Christmas tosses into the Dome. Then, tucking me under his left arm, he steps off Ludgate Hill upon the top of the Nelson Monument, and turns the Dome right side up, scattering the toys all over London.

"Ho, Ho, Ho!" he chuckles, as the toys darken the sky and tumble down the chimneys. "I must be off for another Domeful." With that he hops back to his Penny Fair.

## LONDON-ON-SERPS

**I**T is seven o'clock. Let us stroll along the Knightsbridge bank of the Serpentine. Between the water and the iron fence there is a strip of grass several hundred yards long. It is swarming with nude, half-nude, and quarter-nude boys. Hundreds of them, squirming and wriggling, twisting and tumbling, running and leaping, laughing and shouting, in a frenzy of youthful mirth. As we plunge into the rout and riot, we are drowned in a whirlpool of boys, seething, shrieking, jumping about like landed trout, frisking like puppies, gamboling like kids, freaking like kittens. All sorts and sizes of boys in all sorts and sizes of jackets and trousers and boots. A grand ballet of boys dancing the dance of boyhood. The lust of the boy for raw noise is here let loose. Any sound is good : shriek, squeak, whistle, catcall, groan, yell, scream, shout, yelp, yap, hiss, hoot, howl, giggle, gurgle, chuckle, laugh. The clamour mounts like brandy to the brain. One grows drunk with boy, dazed with perpetual motion and perpetual noise.

At intervals vigilant policemen control the merry

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devilry of these india-rubber imps, herding them across the fence that bounds their paradise. As we walk along the outer edge of their Eden, urchins with white skins and black faces ask us to tell them the time. Like the sick watchers by the Pool of Bethesda, they are waiting for the troubling of the waters. Their angel is Policeman X. Not until half-past seven can one little grimy foot enter the Serpentine. Thanks to the London boy's pathetic instinct for order, no force is needed to secure obedience. They beguile the leaden minutes with every insanity of movement known to boyhood. One stark naked skeletonette whose spine is like a string of knots, and whose ribs and shoulder-blades are sharp as a razor, turns solemn somersaults, his thin body bending like a whip. Other urchins walk on their hands. Some of them are trousered, some of them wear nothing but string garters. Their inverted peripateia is a humorous grotesque beyond sculptor's chisel. It is the true paradox of the featherless biped, the perfect topsy-turvydom of humanity.

Wisps of imp-jargon float across the fence. "I 'opes as nobody don't pinch my boots."—"I 'opes as nobody don't pinch my trousis." What happens if the "trousis" are "pinched"? Policeman X. gravely replies: "Oh, they make up enough between them to take them 'ome." A golden-haired cherub tells me that you can convert your

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jacket into breeches. Soon a knot of young nudities clusters round me. Can they swim ? Oh, yes. They learned in the Notting Hill Baths. It costs them a penny. One haughty Cupid is pointed out with pride. He has swum half-way across the Serps.

“ Serps ? ”

“ Yus ; ‘ London-on-Serps,’ we calls it.”

“ Ever been to the sea ? ” A chorus breaks out : “ I’ve been to Whitstable ! ” “ I’ve been to Clacton ! ” One pretty little lad opens his big blue eyes and says wistfully, “ I’ve never seen the sea.”

“ ’Is muvver is too poor, sir.” Another rogue in ivory boasts : “ My brother nearly won the five-mile championship on the Thames ; ’e got cramp six yards from the post.”

A boylet with dancing brown eyes carries a life-belt made of cork fragments.

“ Where did you get it ? ”

“ Off the back of a seat, sir, in a garden, sir.”

The preparations for the bath are infinitely various. There is a rich variety of loin-rags. A woeful lack of tape or string breeds perplexity. On all sides naked gossoons are pinning and knotting, twisting and tying clouts round each other.

“ Aren’t they allowed to bathe in their pelts ? ”

“ Under fourteen,” growls Policeman X., with laconic solemnity.

The humour of this army of Pucks and Ariels



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does not arride the man in blue. Nor does its pathos stir him. Nothing could make a London policeman smile or weep. For my part, as I watch this carnival of childhood, I do not know whether I ought to laugh or cry. And as the sartorial secrets of a hundred homes are laid bare, I feel a certain shame. Why should I intrude upon the pitiful ingenuities of motherhood? Are not these poor garments sacred? Is not every patch and darn a holy symbol of maternal love? Ah, the mothers of these children, who can fathom their humble yearnings, their weary labour, their dim ambitions? But, see! the sun-gold has been hammered into a yellow doubloon, and it is falling through the branches of the trees. What is that golden network of filmy threads? They are the heart-strings of motherhood.

But look! Three boats put off from the station of the Royal Humane Society. It is half-past seven at last. A shudder of delight runs through the herds of boy. The long strain of waiting in nude impatience snaps. Far as the eye can see there is a frantic rush of running legs across the grass, across the gravel path, into the water. The young limbs glow and glitter in the rosy gold of sunset. Will their many-twinkling charge never end? Where are they springing from? The running regiments seem innumerable. Minute after minute goes by, and still they are leaping out of the grass

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into the water, like grilse fresh from the sea. A saraband of youth, indeed. As the foul rags fall off the young limbs they are transfigured. The horrible ugliness of civilized clothes is magically sloughed, and the beauty of boyhood flashes like a bright sword torn from an evil scabbard. The sad grey water is furrowed with ivory laughter of dauntless youth. Its grey bosom is covered with gnomes and goblins, splashing, dashing, dancing, prancing, hopping, squeaking, shrieking. The clamour and the din increase. We become stupefied with noise. Here for one mad hour King Boy reigns supreme. It is his festival. Look along the vociferous vista of whirling legs and flying arms and bobbing heads. The water boils over with boy. It breeds boys like bubbles and foam-bells. What music has led them out of their slums? Have they heard some Pied Piper? No, they have heard the music of the joy of life, and they have come to beat it out in the cool water. Why does no painter paint this lyrical incarnation of London's youth? The tones of flesh cry for the brush. Why does no Wagner hymn this fierce explosion of Nature in the midst of smoke and dust and bricks? It is the deathless chant of life that rings across the Serpentine, the beautiful melody of being, the chorus of the years that were and the years to be.

The Serpentine spring-board is the focus of the fun. It never ceases to bend and recoil. Packed

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from end to end with boys, each must dive in turn. Each diver vibrates vigorously before the plunge, sometimes vibrating a neighbour into the water. There is a perpetual crawling and writhing and wriggling tangle of flesh around this patient spring-board, whose resilience is sadly enfeebled by overwork. The absurd gravity of boys may be seen here at its best. The spectators split with laughter at the grotesquery of the seething bathers, but the bathers have reached the solemn climax of ecstasy. They are too happy to laugh. One boy nearly drowns himself with purple bladders. Another dives into the folds of an adult obesity that practises the art of floating. Students of physical degeneration ought to peruse these human documents. Nearly all the boys are flat-chested, thin of arm and leg. Their sharp shoulder-blades are shot, and their lean ribs strain the fleshless skin. Under-fed and anæmic, they cannot stay in the water long. Their lips are blue, their teeth chatter, their limbs shiver. Soon the grass is covered with shivering boys. Few have towels. By half-past eight all is over, and bands of tired urchins trail wearily homeward.

## HAT-BOXES AND PLAY-BOXES

**T**HERE are some sights which can be seen in London alone, and one of them is the migration of the schoolboy. The London schoolboy is a bird of passage. Thrice every year he spreads his wings and flies home from school for the holidays. Thrice every year he spreads his wings and flies to school from home. As most of the public schools and most of the preparatory schools close and open about the same time, the streets of London are sprinkled with these small migrants. It is easy to recognize them, for they travel in hansoms and four-wheelers, on the roof of which repose the tell-tale hat-box and the pathetic play-box. For some reason or other the play-box is made of unpainted deal with black iron hinges. On it is painted the name of the owner, and, as a rule, it is stoutly roped, for the lock of the play-box has a trick of giving way under the pressure of boyish treasures. There are afternoons when you may see an unbroken procession of white-faced boys in cabs going down Park Lane towards Victoria. Boys always come back from school in the morning and

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go back to school in the afternoon. The distinction is profound. It symbolizes the eagerness to escape and the reluctance to return.

As a rule there is a mother beside the small boy. The men of Eton and Harrow and Winchester scorn maternal escort. They prefer to come and go like beings who have risen above human weakness. The small boy is in the transitional stage. He is torn by his secret yearning for motherly consolation. He has not yet learned to wean himself from the comfort of the maternal kiss. I have heard of an homunculus who confided to his mother in a moment of frailty that the only thing he longed for at school was her kiss. It was a dreadful confession, for the code of the British schoolboy debars all displays of sentiment. It is at school that the Briton is taught the art of suppressing his feelings. Here he acquires that marble face compared with which the countenance of the Red Indian is a playground of the emotions. Here he trains his flesh to hide his soul. Here he attains that sublime immobility of the features which is the secret of England's greatness. Foreign observers are often puzzled by the passionless frigidity of British actors. They do not realize that it is due to the British school. All our actors are old boys. They bring the expressionless stoniness of the public school and the 'Varsity to the boards.

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The Irishman or the Frenchman can never outgrow his astonishment at the frozen visage of the perfect Englishman. Take him to Victoria Station and show him the stupendous spectacle provided by the English mother parting from the English child. He will expect to see tender embraces, caressing endearments, and intermingled tears. That is exactly what he will not see. The mothers are there and the boys are there. Scores of them. But the sad business of farewell is transacted without any visible sign of grief. The boys are stoically nonchalant, and the mothers are nonchalantly stoical. Now and then you may see a Jewish mother in tears, a Rachel weeping over her large-eyed darling. But the English mother sees her boy off without any public exposition of affection. The luggage on the truck and the porter who puts it in the van are not more imperturbable. Parting is not a sorrow. It is like posting a letter. The Irishman or the Frenchman views these apparently heartless mothers with indignation. He regards them as unnatural beings without pity or compassion.

But he is quite wrong. The emotion is there, although it expresses itself by an absence of expression. These English mothers are strangely quiet and tragically inarticulate. They say a great deal by saying nothing. They carry off their anguish with an heroic fortitude that deceives the

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superficial spectator. They, too, have been disciplined into absolute self-control. From their girlhood they have been drilled in the art of automatic calm. They have been taught to avoid "scenes." They have been born and bred in the tradition of icy phlegm. They know how to freeze their warm blood and how to keep all their skeletons under lock and key. Their pride is stronger than their passions. Their dignity masters their imagination. They know that feeling exists only to be crushed. Yet not without a struggle do they denaturalize themselves. Their arms are aching to clasp the boy who is eating chocolates behind the glass of the carriage window. There is sharp hunger in their dry eyes. Yet mixed with their bottled wistfulness is a vague relief. The strain of the holiday is over. For a few weeks the stress of being a mother will be relaxed, and they will slide back into the safe, dull monotony of dutiful frivolity. They will pack their hearts away with the football boots that grow bigger every year. They will file their souls with the bills that grow longer every term. It is a wonderful system that is able to destroy the most powerful passion in the world, the passion of motherhood.

No other nation in the world has ever based its education on the principle of orphanhood. If the French Government were to enact a law which would tear all French boys at the age of eight from

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the arms of their mothers, there would be a revolution. But the English mother cheerfully endures the torture of separation. I am not sure whether the boy loses as much as the mother loses. That he loses a great deal is undeniable. He gains the hard and strenuous virtues, but he sacrifices the grace of plasticity. He is hammered into a type, and his personal idiosyncrasies are extinguished. He learns to conform and accommodate. His young imagination is nipped in the bud. He becomes a splendid machine which works without spiritual friction. Life cannot easily break him. He is honest and clean and straight, but he is also narrow, incapable of imaginative sympathy, and invincibly proof against the blandishments of art. In the grey groups round the trains at Victoria you see the greatness and the littleness of England, all her Spartan renunciation and all her mutilative inertia.

She has a noble heart, but it beats in a block of marble.



## IN KENSINGTON GARDENS

**L**ONDON contains everything, even Arcady. Are you in the mood for Arcady? Well, come with me this morning. We rise at six, and, leaving the lie-abeds to snore, we walk in Kensington Gardens. I can see its ancient elms from my bedroom window, and often I gather May dew under them before the world is down. There is no May dew now. The grass is burnt white, and the fresh green of the leaves has been sobered by the sun. But as we stroll down the noble avenue of elms that borders the Broad Walk our eyes are cooled by the soft light that fills the verdurous corridor.

Throstle and blackbird are singing, doves are cooing, and through the branches we can watch the wind and the light playing their ancient game on the waters of the Round Pond. Near its silver marge there is a flock of sheep, some nibbling the short herbage, some dipping their soft noses in the water, some lying lazily under the trees. The only sounds in the air are pastoral. A distant dog barks, a rook caws, a sparrow twitters. Ducks are

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quacking as they waddle in the grass. The heavy whirr of their wings is heard as they fly from our intrusion. Then, with a level splash, they slide along the surface of the water.

The morning air is sweet in our lungs as we move round this bowl of blue embroidered with trees. London is shut out by a green silence. We have surprised a rural solitude. It is easy to dream as we idle indolently from tree to tree.

The quiet is populous with gentle memories. On this toy sea Shelley sailed his paper boats. In these glades Matthew Arnold rambled. Browning fled here from De Vere gardens. Laying down his busy pen, Thackeray often left his pot-bellied house in Young Street to smile at the children in the Flower Walk. Here Mr. Barrie found his Peter Pan, and Mr. Max Beerbohm his "Happy Hypocrite." Yes, Kensington Gardens is peopled with ghosts of genius.

The Round Pond is the Petit Trianon, without the mock simplicity and the tragic aftermath. It is a toy paradise untainted by a meretricious past. Kensington Palace nestles cosily in its trees like a doll's house or a Noah's Ark. It might have been built in a nursery by a child, so simple are its lines, so naïve its ornament. The very windows, with their drawn blinds, are unreal. The water-tower leans against the sky like a boy's plaything. The fairy spire of St. Mary Abbot's stabs the toy

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clouds like the spires in picture-books. The golden cross of the Albert Memorial peeps over the trees. I am sure it was a boy who put the Speke Obelisk in that green glade, and planted those two tall chimneys at the end of the vista where the Serpentine hides.

The scene is set for a game. Toy palace, toy churches, toy trees, toy sheep, toy ducks, and toy pond are all ready for the sleeping children.

But see! Under the elms there is a burst of girlish laughter. Are they dryads? Yes, London dryads, pretty little shopgirls from Westbourne Grove. Country maidens, perchance, coming to ease their nostalgia in this Arcady before the long day behind the counter begins. They come, they go, and after a while the white nursemaids with their white babes begin to stipple the green pleasaunce. The charmed stillness is shaken with childish voices. Little elves dance and gambol under the trees, and the old oaks nod to the old palace, as if their loneliness were assuaged. So the ancient play goes on until the luncheon hour empties the toy Eden, and the sheep and the ducks are left in idyllic loneliness.

But not long. The afternoon brings a merrier rout of youth. The schools are closed for the summer holidays, and the children of the poor come to play beside the children of the rich. There are woeful contrasts now in Arcady. Blue

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eyes peer out of tangled golden curls and smudged features at the white fairies in their white chariots. Notting Dale and Kensington Gore stare at each other half in wonder and half in envy, for the fine linen of the one is counterbalanced by the fine liberty of the other. "Rags" can roll on the grass, walk on his hands, turn cartwheels, fling stones, and angle for sticklebacks. The "Just So" child must walk soberly and solemnly round and round, chained to the skirts of watchful Nanna, vigilant Fräulein, or austere Mam'zelle.

Now the gravel margin is covered with children, launching all sorts of craft on all sorts of voyages. Small boys are dragging penny boats through the water, the bigness of their imagination eking out the smallness of their vessels.

Some of the yachtsmen are white-haired old salts, ancient mariners tanned with storm and tempest. One old man looks like Cap'n Cuttle come to life, hook and all. He climbs the iron fence with rheumatic groans, while his tiny granddaughter, Little Nell in person, utters wise warnings. He has a battered brigantine which crawls steadily from shore to shore through the crowd of disdainful yachts. The wind brings the water into his dim eyes, but the old man hobbles with his little girl round and round, absorbed in the voyages of his tramp

Another grotesquely pathetic figure is a work-

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man who pushes a baby in a bassinette round the Pond after an erratic man-o'-war, which staggers under full sail through the Bay of Biscay. He is a shrivelled little Cockney, but his eye blazes with sea-rapture. His feverish gaze fixed on his pocket *Victory*, he fears lest the precious ship should strike reef or rock or shoal or be captured by the pirates that lurk and lie in wait on this perilous coast.

A crowd is gathered at Cape Kensington. A ship is in distress. Slowly she founders, and now only her mast-head is seen above the cruel waves. Alas ! there is no lifeboat, and the weeping owner must conduct salvage operations with a string tied round a stone. But see ! there is a battleship in the offing. It steams rapidly to the rescue. A hawser is made fast, and the great ironclad, rolling realistically, steams out to the rescue amid the sobs of newly widowed wives.

There are many strange craft from Hamley's and Gamage's. Clockwork submarines, electric launches, Thames steamers, fire-boats, torpedo-boats, motor-boats. The odour of methylated spirits and singed paint scents the breeze. Nautical phrases punctuate the chatter. Bald old boys with huge pipes and bamboo-poles thrill with rapture as keen as that which makes the children shriek and shout.

Fathers monopolize the navigation of the new

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schooner which they have bought for their sons. "Dad, you might let me sail it a little!" But Dad mutters something between the teeth clenched on his pipe-stem and goes on grimly navigating. Well, there are less innocent pastimes for parents ; and the children, on the whole, are marvellously patient. "It takes little to amuse a child," says the mendacious proverb. But when the child is forty or fifty years old the saying is not so paradoxical.

I know no prettier sight than this our Cowes in Kensington. The white clouds are tumbling in the blue sky. The trees are piling their massed greenery all round the little regatta. The rippling water slides smoothly along the careening hulls. The white spinnakers flutter and flap and swell, the mainsails swing to and fro, the pennants stream at the mast-heads, and the merry voices of boys and girls float across the mimic ocean. After all, life is very pleasant. We smile tenderly at these sailors sailing their toy ships on this toy sea. Perhaps the Great Spectator smiles still more tenderly at man, the everlasting child, for the Round Pond is very like the world.

## CRIME AND THE CROWD

**T**HACKERAY speaks of "that great baby, the public," and I recall his phrase as I stand outside the New Bailey, watching the crowd that is waiting for the verdict in the Camden Town murder trial. It is a child-crowd, a crowd of grown-up children.

Three o'clock in the afternoon. The crowd stands and stares intently as the floridly pompous building behind whose walls Robert Wood is fighting for his life. It does not talk much, though here and there knots of men idly debate the mystery. But, on the whole, it is a silent and moody crowd. It is composed of all classes. Here are two black-haired actors with flannel collars, fur coats, and blue chins; here a soldier daubs the grey light with a splash of scarlet; here a Gordon Highlander in full fig—tartan plaid, silver-mounted dirk, and white gaiters, with one blob of mud on them—struts up and down, on his arm a solemn servant girl, whose large hands are shapeless lumps wrapped in white cotton gloves. Women with whey-faced babies in their arms are

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constantly arriving and departing. A dandiacal Frenchman with a bushy coal-black beard, neatly combed and parted in the middle, gazes fixedly at the great door and the giant policeman guarding it. A grimy hawker is selling sickly bananas. Women, with purple, puffed cheeks, dull eyes, and oiled hair, are bandying coarse jests with dingy loafers. The cheap eating-houses are filled with unwashed men, devouring strange messes that exude a rank savour of onions and burnt lard. A dim tavern, whose signboard boasts that it has been established two hundred years, is congested with rough men, smoking cigarettes and clay pipes, and drinking glasses of frothing ale and foaming stout. "The King of Denmark" has heard many a murder trial threshed out over its bar. Its smoky walls seem to be gloating and chuckling over its squalid memories. They sneer at the raw, white-grey walls opposite, which are only beginning to take the leprous finger-prints of time and crime. "The King of Denmark" knows the Newgate Calendar by heart.

As the daylight wanes the sightseers come and go perpetually. Some of them drag tired children, muffled to the ears, to gape at the moving scene. There are laughing young girls in twos and threes, whose gaudy hats and cheap furs contrast sharply with the mouldy idlers whose coat-collars are shiny with ancient grease and crime. Some of these



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men are filthy monsters, with a fungoid evil down on their discoloured cheeks and chins. There is a dull, besotted degradation in their glazed eyes, their pendulous lips, their slovenly shuffle. Here is every type of criminal, from the fleshy bully to the gin-soaked drab. That swarthy fellow has a lower lip which protrudes horribly, an obscenity of bruised and bitten flesh.

On the smooth asphalt there is a sticky film of slimy mire, the glutinous London mire that is like no other mire on earth. Men with hose-pipes flush it with clear water that liquefies the mud. Up and down the sloping surface shamble and shuffle the feet of the crowd, hustled to and fro by the police. All sorts of feet in all sorts of boots and shoes. Flimsy, high-heeled shoes of girls, brown boots, black boots, and hideous boots that have been trodden out of shape. Lop-sided boots. Boots with gaping rents. Boots soaked with mud. Up and down, to and fro, they slither and slink. It is a nightmare of boots. They haunt me with a vision of all the boots in London, rising and falling day after day in the cold slush on the cold stones of innumerable streets. Millions of boots moving in couples, with millions of eyes and ears and hands and hearts above them. Boots of the living and boots of the dead. Ugh! By a trick of fancy I think of the boots worn by Phyllis Dimmock for the last time on that fatal Wednesday.

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I see them lying dumbly in that room of horror, while the charred letter lies dumbly in the grate. If they could talk to the embers of the letter, what a tale they could tell!

I leave the crowd and the shiny pavement as the lamps begin to see their yellow light in its foul mirror. I pass the sombre policeman guarding the great glass doors. I climb the broad staircase to the vast hall with its painted frescoes, its veiled lights, and its waiting groups. It is curiously like the Central Hall of the House of Commons. I go into Court No. 1. I see the sword of justice in its sheath behind the grim judge. I see the prisoner sitting in the empty loneliness of the huge dock, a warder on either hand, and a keen-faced doctor behind him. Round three sides of the dock is a glass screen, and I can see the handrail plunging down the stairs that lead to the cell and to the scaffold and to the grave. The crowd in the court is not like the crowd outside. It is more subtle and more cynical. In it there are delicate and dainty women and cultured men—actors, actresses, novelists, dramatists, journalists, alienists, lawyers in robe and wig. It is flippant. It is cruel. It jests. It knows that the prisoner is safe. The judge knows. The lawyers know. The police know. The prisoner knows. We all know. Before the jury return the prisoner comes back. He is chewing a last

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mouthful of bread and butter, for he has just taken tea. He is cool, calm, almost gay. He sketches the judge, while the spectators stare at him in amazement. The warders stop it. He smiles. He talks to them airily. He smiles. He puts both hands in his trouser pockets, and strolls round the dock, surveying us all with a swagger and a smile. He smiles a cheery recognition at his father. He signs autographs with a flourish. The jury returns. He licks his lips. At the words "Not guilty" a sharp shout of exultation explodes like a mine, as if a button had been pressed. The judge raises his hand, and across the sudden silence is heard the muffled roar of the crowd outside, like an echo of the roar within. It is a superb stage-effect, electrically dramatic in its lightning rapidity.

I hurry to the outer gates. They are closed. Through their solidly massive bars I see a swaying, writhing, struggling tidal wave of white faces, moving unsteadily under the vague, shifting light of the street lamps. The numberless mouths are wide open like little black holes, and out of these little black holes is pouring a torrent of bellowing discords, which blend into a high, shrill, sharp-edged song without words, ringing metallically, brazenly, in a prolonged clang of fiercely passionate triumph. The iron note of the song is held without fluctuation. It does not flag or falter. It drives straight on like a knife tearing through

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paper. It does not soar or sink. It is the cry of the crowd, the roar of the strange beast with a thousand throats. It is horribly human, hideously alive, appallingly savage. It is the howl of the beast of blood that stoned Stephen and crucified Christ, that battered down the gates of the Bastille, and drank blood in Cawnpore and Khartoum. It is the brazen chant of the Mafficker, the iron cadence of the Commune. It is the maddening chorus that has sacked a thousand cities. It is the dead march of death that has been heard in pogrom and massacre, in riot and in rapine. Even its exultation is hoarse with menace, even its triumph is sonorous with fury. Civilization has not changed the mob. It is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

## THE CHARM OF A CHILD

WITHOUT children and flowers London would grow old and cold. It is hard to imagine a childless and flowerless London. If we knew that there were children and flowers in the stars, I think those night-lights would look less inhospitable. I fear there are no children in the moon. I doubt whether there are daffodils in the Pleiades. I am convinced that children and flowers are the especial grace of life. It is not easy to explain the charm of a child or the charm of a flower. It is the charm of a dying beauty that does not know it dies. It is the pathos of mortality unaware. It is the sad loveliness of fading sweetness. Knowledge is an ugly thing. When life begins to strive against death it loses its poised freshness. A man is comic, for he is full of helpless foresight. But a child is not comic. Being helpless, without foresight, it is exempt from the irony of existence. We who behold its exquisite incapacity to look before and after are stung by a sense of contrast. We feel that a gulf divides it from us. We watch its feet joyously approaching

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the abyss of wisdom. We await its fall out of the paradise of the unknown into the purgatory of the known. We know that no necromancy can stay its steps. Our impotence fills us with a secret tenderness. Helplessly we stretch forth our arms—we who have fallen—to the dream about to fall. The love of children is the pity of remembrance. We, too, were once children in our misty past.

Another fragile grace of childhood is its delicate immorality. There is no such thing as a moral child. For it the dreadful machinery of morality does not exist. There is no worm of conscience in its soul. It is a pity that the arrival of the worm cannot be postponed. I suppose education is a necessary evil, but why meet it half-way? There ought to be a close time for children. The torture of teaching ought to be staved off as long as possible. We ought to foster healthy ignorance in the young. We ought to give prizes for stupidity. We ought to reward children for resisting the baneful onslaughts of the schoolmaster. Their healthy hatred of learning ought to be encouraged. Clever children ought to be severely punished. Precocity ought to be a nursery crime. The ambition of every boy ought to be to fight his way to the foot of the class. The bright child ought to be put on bread and water.

Education is a gross impertinence. We regard a child as a thing that must be taught. We are

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wrong. We ought to allow children to teach us, for we learn more from them than they can learn from us. It is adult arrogance to talk about the need of forming a child's mind. We can deform it, but we cannot form it. All educational aphorisms are horrible. "As the twig's bent the tree's inclined." But are we fit to bend the twig? Our idol is uniformity. We wish to bend every twig into a parallel line with every other twig. Nature is wiser. She abhors landscape gardening with its rhomboids and trapeziums of dragooned greenery. Growth is the best gardener.

The growth of a child's mind is the most wonderful thing in life. Why is that growth arrested as soon as the child falls into the hands of teachers? Why does a child's mind grow more rapidly during the first five years of its life than during the next twenty? Because it is free. The mind of a child is supposed to be feeble. A man is supposed to have a powerful mind. The exact opposite is the truth. Most men have weak minds, whereas the childish mind is almost invincibly strong. The supple play of a child's mind is marvellous. It asks unanswerable questions. "Where was I before I was born?" inquired a boy of four. That riddle is insoluble. "Mother," said a little girl, "who is God?" That is a poser for the theologian. "Why am I myself?" That question was put to me by a cherub who had not yet grasped the

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fearful mystery of multiplication. I did not attempt to answer it.

The logic of a child is crushing. One Shrove Tuesday I heard an infant of four reduce his parents to a state of mental pulp. He bent over his plate and licked the sugar off his pancake.

"Don't do that," said his father.

"Why?" said the child.

"It is rude to lick."

"Must I never lick anything?"

"Never," said his father.

"Then," said the child, after a thoughtful pause, "what is the word 'lick' for?"

It was a triumph of the Socratic method.

Are you afraid of a child? I am. We all are. Education is based upon our fear. We are afraid of being found out. Discipline is the armour of ignorance. Obedience is the sword of tyranny. We lie to each other, but the lies of the adult to the adult are nothing compared to the lies of the adult to the child. The nursery is a palace of lies. The school is a crematorium of truth. Parents pay the schoolmaster to teach what they do not believe. They hire pedagogues to assassinate the mind, and they call it education. We grieve over the decay of filial respect, but what about parental respect? Can we ask our children to respect us when we do not respect them?

It would astonish parents if they could see them-



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selves as their children see them. Children are adepts in dissimulation. They swiftly learn to conceal their private opinions about their elders. Have you ever surprised the look of amused contempt with which a child meets the clumsy advances of a patronizing grown-up? He knows that the amiable idiot is doing his best, but he recognizes the amateur, and nobly endures his fatuities. The child is all imagination, and he instinctively resents any attempt to treat him as a harmless little lunatic. We err in trying to stoop down to a child. We ought rather to reach up to him. We ought to bring our dead imagination into touch with his living one. I know a boy who loathes children's books. He often begs for a real grown-up book.

Our publishers fusillade the nursery with books which are an insult to the mind of childhood. They are careful exercises in inanity. They are hideous with a revolting facetiousness. I would not give these books to a puppy. There are beneath the intellectual level of Bedlam. The authors of these books are stickit novelists, baffled serialists, and undetected criminals. The modern child-book is stuffed with realism and devoid of romance. It stones imagination to death with facts. It even makes animals uninteresting. I once gave a little boy "The Book of Romance," and I was delighted to find him one wet afternoon weeping luxuriously

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on the hearthrug over the death of Roland at the battle of Roncesvalles. They were golden tears full of Homeric magnanimity and heroic pity. The same boy was staying at a farmhouse one summer. He had been lying in a hammock in the orchard reading one of Mr. Andrew Lang's gallant fairy books. Boylike he left the book in the hammock. Next day before breakfast he found it dank with dew and woefully stained and torn. A romantic cow had been chewing it during the night. There was green cud on the leaves. "I suppose," said the boy, "we'll have fairies in our milk this morning." That conceit is a kind of wild poetry. It has imaginative humour in it.

Children are very humorous. I know an elflet who is only two years old, yet she bubbles over with humour. It is an emanation of radiant wonder. It flickers shyly in her blue eyes. It wavers in her tiny lips. It tinkles in her laugh and ripples in her smile. It is a very subtle quality, full of fine gradations. For example, she can distinguish between real grief and sham grief. She can caricature sorrow. She can pretend to cry, but her histrionic sobs and moans are quite different from her real ones. There is a chuckle in them. She can also parody the mannerisms of other children. She can burlesque a fellow-baby in a pet. Her dear friend Marguerite has a peculiarly wrathful way of saying "No!" She can catch

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the very inflection of her voice, and cry her friend's "No!" like a baby Bernhardt. Her memory is incredible. She can remember the rhyme-words of her long nursery rhymes and utter them with diabolical patness. I am sure education destroys the memory. This morsel seems to forget nothing. The odd thing is that she takes in ideas as a flower takes in sunlight. She knows things that cannot have entered her little brain by any link of association. It is a sort of magical absorption.

She is most inscrutable when she is silent. At times in the midst of boisterous fun she suddenly glides into an immobile rapture. Her face listens and her eyes are filmed with a beautiful wonder. You can see the flower-soft soul moving behind the flower-soft face, the life within whispering to the life without. Her look is visible poetry. It is at once a rebuke and a beckoning. It enables one to realize how ineffable life can be and how coarse.

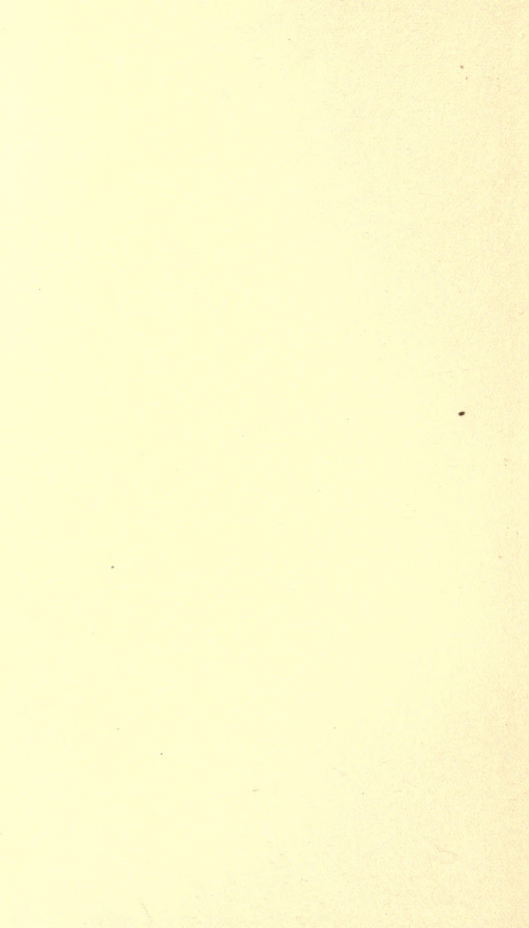
Children are dramatists. This pretty sweetening dramatizes everything. One day she saw a flock of sheep in Kensington Gardens. For her it was a terrible adventure. She went about baa-ing vigorously. A few days afterwards a sheepskin rug came home from the cleaners. When she saw it she stood petrified with terror. At last she baa-ed timidly, and by degrees mustered up courage to toddle over to it. With valiant fool-

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hardiness she put forth her hand to touch it, and then she shuddered with a fearful joy. It was another terrible adventure. Her dauntless courage was visibly wrestling with her dread. As I watched the little drama, I saw in it the whole history of man. It was the past in miniature. There in essence was the story of the human experiment, with its explorations, curiosities, and conquests. And I wondered whether there is a Spectator who beholds the little drama of man as I beheld the little drama of the child—watching with wise smiles little Man toddling over his little patches of land and sea with his little toys of steam and electricity, and listening tenderly to his little language. Yes, and perhaps behind that Spectator there is another Spectator—an infinite ascending series of Spectators. “Baa!” said the babe. After all, did Shakespeare say more?





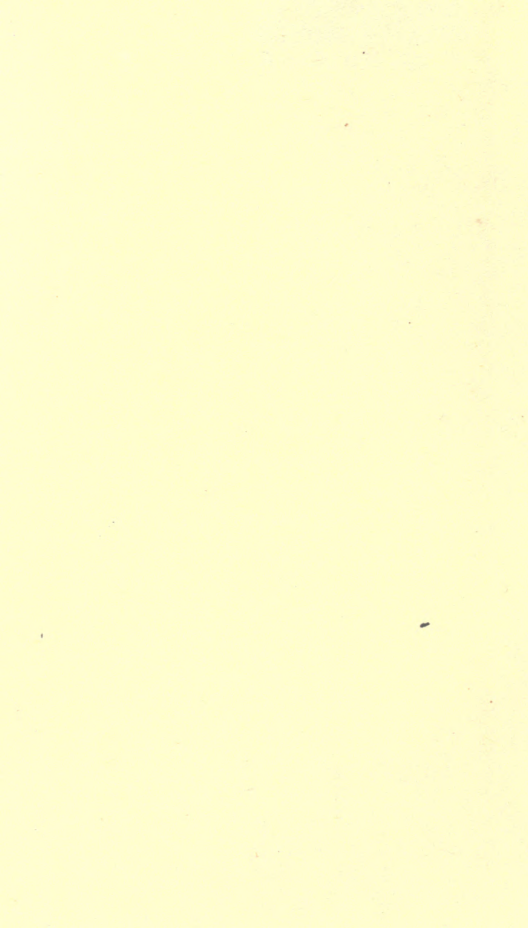














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